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TOWARD A MALAYSIAN MALAYSIA:  
A STUDY OF POLITICAL INTEGRATION

by



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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
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The undersigned certify that they have read,  
and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for  
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## ABSTRACT

Political integration is concerned with developing a set of common political orientations which will create a common identification of individuals and groups with the political system and its symbols and the acceptance of all component national groups as fellow political actors. The political culture of Malaysia is fragmented into a number of communal sub-cultures mutually differentiated on the grounds of race, language, traditions, customs and ways of life. These divisions are further reinforced and accentuated by communal specialization of economic and political roles, settlement pattern, external attraction, socio-economic disparities, communication media, pattern of political socialization, and past political experiences. Whatever horizontal ties the members of the different communities have with one another are mostly functional and nominal rather than personal and emotional. Although the different communities have now become attached to the country, the nature and degree of this attachment vary from one community to another.

Ever since the 1920's, the integrative crisis in Malaysia has consistently centered around the fundamental conflict between the Malay demand for building a Malay country and the non-Malay demand for a non-communal nation. This crisis has formally been resolved in favor of Malay supremacy. In today's Malaysia, Malay supremacy is recognized in the constitution and Malay cultural model is being held up for non-Malay assimilation. This solution has now been repudiated by an increasing number of the non-Malays who demand political and cultural equality.





The Malay elites who command the nation-building process are attempting to do away with non-Malay ethnocentrism by promoting Malay ethnocentrism through the assimilation of the non-Malays into the Malay language and culture. This policy has aroused intercommunal fear, suspicion, distrust, and open conflicts. This study suggests that Malayization lacks both utilitarian and identitive appeals to the Chinese and Indians who tend to see the acceptance of the Malay cultural model as a retrogression to a less desirable culture state. Despite these difficulties, the Malay elites have under their command the coercive power of the political system. Such a situation does not facilitate peaceful adjustment but enhances the prospect of communal conflicts and violence. Moreover, the exclusivity and rigidity of Malay-Muslim political culture, and the widespread sense of relative deprivation due to the political and economic imbalance along communal lines have increased the crisis proportion of the integrative problem in Malaysia.

This thesis suggests that political integration can be brought about in Malaysia by adopting a nation-building policy to fit the multi-racial and multicultural realities of the Malaysian society. To achieve this, cultural pluralism should be accepted as the national base and all communities should be resocialized to accept the following five political fundamentals: multiracialism, multiculturalism, multilingualism, political equality, and the uplift of the poor and backward sectors of the country. Popular commitment to these fundamentals would lead to the development of a common identification with the Malaysian nation and a sense of confidence, trust and acceptance among the different communities.





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Finally, it is obvious that I am alone responsible for the views and statements of fact found in this thesis.

B. N. C.

Ottawa, Ontario,  
March, 1971.





TO MY MOTHER





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## PART I

### INTRODUCTION





## CHAPTER I

### POLITICAL INTEGRATION

Amitai Etzioni defines integration as "the ability of a unit or system to maintain itself in the face of internal and external challenge."<sup>1</sup> Implied in this definition is that integration involves more than a mere amalgamation of the separate parts; it is the blending together of the separate parts into a harmoniously interdependent whole with self-maintaining and adaptive power.<sup>2</sup> Thus the term integration can be used to refer to an extremely wide variety of physical, social, economic, or political phenomena ranging from physiological integration in a human body, social integration in the

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<sup>1</sup>Amitai Etzioni, Political Unification: A Comparative Study of Leaders and Forces (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1965), 330.

<sup>2</sup>Karl W. Deutsch refers to the self-maintaining and adaptive power of a social group or structure as the ability to "undergo the widest range of changes without losing its cohesion in a few essentials, so as to be able to include other patterns and structures within itself without losing its identity or its continued capacity for growth." See his Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundation of Nationality (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1953), 49. This power of a group lies in its cohesiveness rather than in the interdependence of its constituent members. All that are integrated are interdependent, but not all that are interdependent are integrated.



fields of education, language, legal systems, or literature,<sup>3</sup> to economic integration of the advanced and the backward sectors of a society and integration of the primordial groups in a country into a national community. Political integration, which is the concern of this study, constitutes only one dimension of the entire range of integrative phenomena.

To understand the integrative crisis in the transitional societies, several general characteristics of the concept of integration should first be clarified. First, as a state of human relationships, integration stands for both a persistent human disposition to do things or respond to external challenges in a certain way and a persistent pattern of relationships among the individuals or groups of individuals, which exhibits certain particular attributes and properties usually referred to as unity or cohesiveness. Secondly, integration may refer to relationships directly among the individuals in small communities or to those among communities or separate national entities. Although at both levels, it is the individuals who are ultimately involved in the integrative process, there is an additional dimension at the national or international level, for it is at this level that it involves the relationships among "the already integrated."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>See Nick Aaron Ford, "Cultural Integration Through Literature", Teachers College Record, 66, 4 (January 1965), 332-337.

<sup>4</sup>See Philip E. Jacob and Henry Teune, "The Integrative Process: Guidelines for Analysis of the Bases of Political Community", in Philip E.





Thirdly, no society in the world is completely integrated.<sup>5</sup> The solution of certain integrative problems at a certain stage of development may call for new integration at a later stage. Integration is certainly the "fundamental need" of the transitional states;<sup>6</sup> but even in a society where the stage of "abundance" has been attained, the technological revolution of automation may generate new crises which require new integrative measures.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, all cultures show a certain degree of fragmentation because not everyone in a society is subject to a homogeneous socialization process and has an identical mind. Finally, the concept of integration is reversible.

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Jacob and James Toscano (eds.), The Integration of Political Communities (New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1964), 9.

<sup>5</sup>Fred Riggs Warns that "The basic assumptions and models of political science, economics, and sociology ... seem predicted on the existence, substantially, of a national community. This assumption greatly simplifies the study of social functions and corresponding structures... Broadly speaking, however, a complete national community seems to be a special case, not a typical one." See his Administration in Developing Countries (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1964), 159.

<sup>6</sup>See Claude E. Welch, Jr., (ed.), Political Modernization: A Reader in Comparative Political Change (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., Inc., 1967), 147.

<sup>7</sup>A. F. K. Organski distinguishes four stages of political development: political unification, industrialization, national welfare, and abundance. At each stage, a developing political system is facing a set of new problems. See his The Stages of Political Development (New York: Knopf, 1965).



"National integration is a phenomenon as much as national disintegration."<sup>8</sup> In most of the developing nations, the integrative revolution is directed toward the creation of a national outlook through the erosion or elimination of primordial solidarity or attachments based on blood, race, language, religion, locality, tradition, kinship or communal groupings.<sup>9</sup> The first result of the integrative attempt in these societies often tends to be "a reincarnation and expansion of communal solidarity rather than an integration of diverse groups."<sup>10</sup>

The concept of political integration is thus "multi-faceted. ... any simple definition can only convey one aspect of it."<sup>11</sup> Lucian

<sup>8</sup>Samuel P. Huntington, "Political Development and Political Decay", World Politics, 17, 3 (April 1965), 392. Huntington has further developed his concept of political decay in his book Political Order in Changing Societies (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

<sup>9</sup>See Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States", in his (ed.), Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa (London: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), 105-157.

<sup>10</sup>Claude E. Welch, Jr., "The Comparative Study of Political Modernization", in his (ed.), op. cit., 10.

<sup>11</sup>Leonard Binder, "National Integration and Political Development", American Political Science Review, 57, 3 (September 1964), 622. Jacob and Teune (op. cit., 10) also point out that political integration "refers to more than one aspect or dimension of behavior. It has no one best indicator."





W. Pye refers to it as

the extent to which the entire polity is organized as a system of interacting relationships, first among the offices and agencies of government, and then among the various groups and interests seeking to make demands upon the system, and finally in the relationships between officials and articulating citizens.<sup>12</sup>

Amitai Etzioni, on the other hand, defines integration as a condition in which the control of the means of violence, the capacity to allocate resources, rewards and punishments, and the locus of identification are transferred from the member-units to the general system of which they are members.<sup>13</sup> Other writers treat integration as a process which leads to a condition in which individuals and groups share a common interest or in which individual attitudes of loyalty are shifted from a distinct national setting into a new international focus or from ethnic or cultural groupings to a new national community.<sup>14</sup> As a matter

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<sup>12</sup>Lucian W. Pye, Aspects of Political Development (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1966), 65.

<sup>13</sup>Amitai Etzioni, op. cit., 3-5. Etzioni's study is concerned primarily with integration at the international level.

<sup>14</sup>See Joseph S. Nye, Jr., Pan Africanism and East African Integration (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965); Ernst Haas, The Uniting of Europe (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958); and Karl W. Deutsch, et al., Political Community and the North Atlantic Area (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957). Deutsch and his co-authors treat integration both as a process and as a condition. As a condition, politically integrated states no longer anticipate waging war among them; as a process, integration consists of the changes which bring about this state of peaceful co-existence.



of fact, a total of five different ways in which the term integration has been used by different political inquirers has been identified by Myron Weiner.<sup>15</sup> They are: national integration, territorial integration, mass-elite integration, value integration and integrative behavior, each of which deals with one particular aspect of "the generalized problem of holding a system together."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Myron Weiner, "Political Integration and Political Development", The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, 358 (March 1965), 52-64. As examples of the various uses of the term integration, see the following studies: Leonard Binder, op. cit., 622-631; Jacob and Toscano (eds.), op. cit.; Werner S. Landecker, "Types of Integration and Their Measurement", American Journal of Sociology, 56, 3 (November 1951), 332-340; W. Howard Wriggins, "National Integration", in Myron Weiner (ed.), Modernization: The Dynamics of Growth (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1966), 181-191; James S. Coleman and Carl Rosberg (eds.), Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964); James S. Coleman, "The Problem of Political Integration in Emergent Africa", Western Political Quarterly, 8, 1 (March 1955), 44-58; Karl W. Deutsch, "The Growth of Nations: Some Recurrent Patterns of Political and Social Integration", World Politics, 5, 2 (January 1953), 168-195; idem and William J. Foltz (eds.), Nation-Building (New York: Atherton Press, 1966); and Claude Ake, A Theory of Political Integration (Homewood, Illinois: The Dorsey Press, 1967).

<sup>16</sup>Myron Weiner, "Political Integration ...", op. cit., 55. According to Weiner's analysis, national integration is concerned with the bringing together culturally and socially discrete groups in a single territorial unit and the establishment of a national identity over-shadowing, or leading to the elimination of, subordinate parochial loyalties; territorial integration refers to the problem of establishing national central authority over subordinate political units or regions; mass-elite integration deals with the problem of bridging the gap between the rulers and the ruled; value integration is concerned with the creation of a minimum normative consensus necessary to maintain a social order; and integrative behavior emphasizes the capacity of a people in a society to organize for some common purpose. Ibid., 52-64.





Based on the different uses of the term integration, one can make a distinction between vertical and horizontal political integration. At the vertical level, political integration is primarily concerned with developing (1) the capacity of a government to control the territory under its jurisdiction and to reach down into the society (through bureaucratic penetration) and effect basic policies; (2) a set of popular attitudes and commitments toward the common political unit and the symbols of that political unit generally described as attachment, loyalty, allegiance, and a willingness to place national above local or parochial concerns; and (3) a sense of confidence and trust of the non-elites in the political elites and a set of structural arrangements and processes through which the discrete elements in society can be brought into meaningful interaction with the political elites and the mass-elite gap can gradually be bridged.

At the horizontal level, on the other hand, political integration involves both structural integration and the sense of integration individuals or groups have with each other as members of the same political system. Structural integration has two dimensions. First, it refers to the process by which individuals of diverse backgrounds in a political system have become distributed in the institutional structures at the primary-group level and have assumed roles in general civic life in the society. When a society is structurally integrated in this sense, primordial or ascriptive criterion is no longer a rele-

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vant attribute in the determination of group membership, in all the allocation of people to positions in the social system or in the distribution of social and political resources. Second, while the development of greater structural differentiation and functional specialization increases system capabilities to face the developmental challenges, the result of differentiation and specialization often gives rise to the need of structural integration so as to ensure coordination and cooperation among different structures and functions and between different levels of structures. Another aspect of structural integration is concerned with the development of a system of interacting articulation structures from the various primordial interests so that the discrete elements in the society can be brought into meaningful political participation as members of a common political system. As regards identification with one's fellow citizens, it is a crucial aspect of the horizontal integration of a political system. It defines the extent to which members of a political system have a feeling of trust, confidence and acceptance in their fellow political actors. If the political actors of a political system do not have trust and confidence in one another, political behavior is unpredictable and orderly change is unlikely.

It should be pointed out that the vertical identification of the individuals and groups with the superordinate political unit and

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its symbols is fundamental to the concept of political integration for the extent of this identification defines one's national identity. Closely related to this kind of national integration are the horizontal lines of integration among individuals and groups but they may vary independently because a high sense of vertical identification with the common political unit does not necessarily mean that the sense of horizontal identification with one's fellow political actors is also high.<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, as opposed to national integration, other aspects of the integrative problem, such as structural integration, mass-elite integration, value integration, integrative behavior, can be referred to as what Weiner and LaPalombara call "process integration". Both national integration and process integration are closely related, but they "can and should be analytically separated because empirical cases suggest that one can have one form of integration without the other."<sup>18</sup> Kirchheimer's study of France's political culture shows that

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<sup>17</sup> Sidney Verba, "Conclusion: Comparative Political Culture", in Lucian W. Pye and Sidney Verba (eds.), Political Culture and Political Development (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 535-537. Verba observes that "If there is any meaning in the old quip that 'every Frenchman loves France and hates every other Frenchman', it suggests that even where there is a generally shared sense of membership in a nation, the horizontal lines of integration among individuals and groups in the political system may be quite a bit weaker" (ibid., 537).

<sup>18</sup> Myron Weiner and Joseph LaPalombara, "The Impact of Parties on Political Development", in Joseph LaPalombara and Myron Weiner (eds.), Political Parties and Political Development (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 413.





although she achieved national integration several hundred years ago, process integration still remains imperfectly established.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, the task of establishing a national political process bringing the rural and urban population in Norway into meaningful interaction still remains to be accomplished despite the fact that there has been no question as to the national identity of the Norwegians.<sup>20</sup>

This study deals primarily with the general problems of creating a Malaysian national outlook from the culturally diverse and particular Malay, Chinese, and Indian communal identifications. On the whole, it is mainly concerned with two of the several dimensions of the integrative crisis in Malaysia, namely, the development of a set of popular attitudes and commitments among the various communities in Malaysia toward the common political community generally referred to as attachment, and loyalty, and the development of a feeling of trust, confidence and acceptance among the entire Malaysian population. It should be remembered that communal differences in Malaysia cut across all the divisions in communal life. As a result, it is difficult to confine the integrative crisis in Malaysia to strictly "political" arenas or

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<sup>19</sup>Otto Kirchheimer, "The Transformation of the Western European Party System", in Joseph LaPalombara and Myron Weiner (eds.), op. cit., 177-200. See also Henry W. Ehrmann, Politics in France (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1968), 1-17; 303-320.

<sup>20</sup>Stein Rokkan, "Electoral Mobilization, Party Competition, and National Integration", in Joseph LaPalombara and Myron Weiner (eds.), op. cit., 241-265.



to restrict its discussions to only two of its dimensions. In the Malaysian situation, integration in the fields of education,<sup>21</sup> language, legal systems,<sup>22</sup> and communal literature and mass media, is closely related to, and as much a political question as, national integration.

### Political Integration and Political Culture

Since integration is expressed by the dispositions of individuals and groups to associate with one another in an integrative way, one may well ask: what are these human dispositions? The words most frequently used to refer to these attributes of human relationships are "cohesiveness", "unity", "solidarity", "consensus", "harmony", "homogeneity", "common bond", "fellow-feeling", or "community-feeling". The use of these words leads to another question: what are those independent factors which cause the growth or development of these various

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<sup>21</sup>Over the past two decades, the integration of the communal education systems into a national system has been one of the most outstanding political issues in Malaysia. See C. H. Enloe, Multi-Ethnic Politics: The Case of Malaysia (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1967), 74-210; H. P. Lim, Education for Racial Integration in Malaysia (M.A. Thesis, McGill University, 1966); Lim Lian Geok, hui-yi p'en-p'en lu (Kuala Lumpur: United Chinese School Teachers' Association, 1963); and Robert O. Tilman, "Education and Political Development in Malaysia", in his (ed.), Man, State, and Society in Contemporary Southeast Asia (New York: Praeger, 1969), 228-242.

<sup>22</sup>For a discussion of the problem of legal integration in Malaysia, see T. A. Manring, "National Integration and Legal Systems: Malaysia", Malaya Law Review, 10, 1 (July 1968), 29-54.





sorts of human disposition or feeling?

According to Jacob and Teune, ten factors which may exert an integrative influence in the integrative process can be identified: (1) physical proximity; (2) homogeneity - social, economic, and others; (3) transactions, or interactions, among persons or groups; (4) mutual knowledge; (5) shared functional interests; (6) the "character" or "motive" pattern of a group; (7) the structural frame or system of power and decision-making; (8) the sovereignty-dependency status of the community; (9) governmental effectiveness; and (10) previous integrative experiences. Jacob and Teune further claim that "sound research on political integration" lies in finding reliable methods of identifying and measuring integrative factors.<sup>23</sup> It should be noted, however, that the integrative influence of these ten factors does not remain constant in different environments. Under certain circumstances, the absence of some of them does not necessarily mean the absence of political integration. For example, physical proximity of individuals may not lead to their mutual knowledge; and a common bond may exist among complete strangers. "People separated by linguistic or religious barriers, even if they live in the same slums or palaces, inside or outside a ghetto or reservation, can be more alien to one another than those separated by

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<sup>23</sup>Philip E. Jacob and Henry Teune, in Jacob and Toscano (eds.), op. cit., 11-45.



oceans and high mountains."<sup>24</sup> In certain situations, physical proximity and mutual knowledge may generate antagonism and distrust among groups or individuals instead of solidarity and acceptance. As a matter of fact, "Social or geographical segregation of communal groups may lessen communal conflict if it reflects a mutually agreed upon reduction or elimination of competitive communal interaction."<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the case of Switzerland seems to indicate that ethnic heterogeneity and the physical separation of the different nationalities does not necessarily inhibit the growth of a Swiss political nation.<sup>26</sup> Finally, from a conceptual point of view, Jacob-Teune's formulation would result in circular measurement because they use the same indicator or phenomenon to identify and measure both the dependent variable (the state of integration) and the independent variable (factors causing integration).<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Hermann Weilenmann, "The Interlocking of Nation and Personality Structure" in Karl W. Deutsch and William J. Foltz (eds.), op. cit., 34.

<sup>25</sup>Robert Melson and Howard Wolpe, "Modernization and the Politics of Communalism: A Theoretical Perspective", American Political Science Review, 59, 4 (December 1970), 1114.

<sup>26</sup>See Max Huber, "The Swiss Concept of the State", in Sir Alfred Zimmermann (ed.), Modern Political Doctrines (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), 215-217.

<sup>27</sup>For example, Jacob and Teune argue that mutual knowledge or understanding among individuals or groups is essential to their functioning together effectively as a political community. Thus, mutual knowledge



It can thus be argued that the feeling of a common bond, cohesiveness, solidarity, or acceptance, of a people, or their sense of identification with the common political unit, arises from their commitment to a common political culture which defines their political orientations toward their political system (vertical integration) and their fellow political actors (horizontal integration). Therefore, "in essence the problem of political integration is one of developing a political culture and of inducing commitment to it."<sup>28</sup> The presence of the ten integrative factors mentioned earlier may facilitate the task of this development; but it is not in itself decisive.

Sidney Verba defines political culture as consisting of "the systems of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols and values which defines the situation in which political action takes place."<sup>29</sup> These

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consists purely of a set of attitudes or perceptions of fact, which Jacob and Teune use as a measure of the factor influencing integration rather than as a measure of integration itself. But Jacob and Teune define integration as a "strong cohesiveness among a social group" based on "a feeling of identity and self-awareness" or as "a relationship of community among people within the same political entity" (op. cit., 4). Thus, it can be seen that the same measure has been applied to identify the state of integration as well as one of the factors causing integration. For a brief evaluation of Jacob-Teune's scheme, see Alvin Rabushka, Ethnic Components of Political Integration in Two Malayan Cities (Ph.D. Dissertation, Washington University, 1968), 8-15.

<sup>28</sup>Claude Ake, op. cit., 1.

<sup>29</sup>Sidney Verba, "Conclusion ...", in Pye and Verba (eds.), op. cit., 513.





beliefs, symbols and values are the most important determinants of the pattern of political cognition, affection, and evaluation among individuals and groups of a political system. These three dimensions - cognition, affection, and evaluation - of political orientations are interrelated, and may combine in a variety of ways to define individual knowledge, individual feelings of trust, involvement, attachment, acceptance, rejection, alienation, and the like, and individual judgments and opinions, about political objects and events. The different combinations of these three dimensions of political orientations may give birth to a host of sub-cultural patterns in a single political entity. In fact, all political cultures are, to a certain degree, compound - partly uniform and partly fragmented; and fragmentation is especially marked in a multi-ethnic, multi-communal or multi-cultural society. However, the fact that a political system has plural sub-cultural orientations does not necessarily mean that it is not politically integrated. In Switzerland, cultural pluralism does not prevent the emergence of a Swiss political nation, which is based, "not on ethnic or, more particularly, on linguistic peculiarities or nationalities, but solely on a common history and common ideas."<sup>30</sup> In other words, it is

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<sup>30</sup> Max Huber, op. cit., 216. Emphasis added. "The Swiss", Karl W. Deutsch observes, "may speak four different languages and still act as one people, for each of them has enough learned habits, preferences, symbols, memories, patterns of landholding and social stratification, events in history, and personal associations, all of which together permit him to communicate more effectively with other Swiss than with speakers of his own language who belong to other peoples." See his Nationalism and Social Communication ..., op. cit., 71.



the common political culture - the shared orientations and beliefs of political actors - that determines the extent of political integration of a political system. These common orientation patterns among individuals and groups give coherence, predictability and regularity to "demands made upon the system, the responses to laws and to appeals for support, and the conduct of individuals in their political roles."<sup>31</sup>

It is thus clear that a "political system is integrated to the extent that the minimal units (individual political actors) develop in the course of political interaction a pool of commonly accepted norms regarding political behavior and a commitment to the political behavior patterns legitimized by these norms."<sup>32</sup> This normative consensus on political fundamentals determines the extent of vertical identification of the individuals and groups with the political system and its symbols as well as their horizontal identification with their fellow political actors. Vertical and horizontal identifications are the most important dimensions of the integrative crisis in the transitional societies. "Unless those individuals who are physically and legally members of a political system ... are also psychologically members of

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<sup>31</sup>Gabriel A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell, Jr., Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1966), 50.

<sup>32</sup>Claude Ake, op. cit., 3.





that system", Sidney Verba writes, "orderly patterns of change are unlikely." He adds

It is the sense of identity with the nation that legitimizes the activities of national elites and makes it possible for them to mobilize the commitment and support of their followers. ... From the point of view ... of political elites the problem of national identity may be the first one that must be faced. Unless they are sure of their identity the many other problems of change will have to wait.<sup>33</sup>

Furthermore, unless individuals and groups trust one another, orderly transfer of power is also unlikely. "If non-elites do not in some way identify with and have confidence in political elites, the elites will have to exact obedience by more forceful and perhaps more destabilizing means."<sup>34</sup>

The extent to which political orientations and beliefs are shared may be a good indicator of the cohesiveness of a political system. But the types of orientations and beliefs which are shared have a decisive effect on the extent of cohesiveness because "some basic political values may indeed lead to conflict if shared on the level of generality."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Sidney Verba, "Conclusion ..." in Lucian W. Pye and Sidney Verba (eds.), op. cit., 529, 530.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 536.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 526.



One example is the shared belief among groups that the economic status of a particular sector of the society should be given special attention by governmental outputs. This consensus might lead to serious strife if the sector in question and the nature of protection given were not commonly defined. Secondly, although it is true that it is the common political culture that determines the extent of political integration of a society, the sub-cultural orientations of the individuals and particular communities of individuals and the power position of each of these communities should not be overlooked. On the one hand, "for purposes of predicting the political future of a nation the beliefs of certain groups are more crucial than others - those in actual power, members of organized groups, those living near the centers of communication and the like."<sup>36</sup> On the other, political system with a core culture or with a politically dominant community which claims to be the core cultural unit is frequently tempted to end the state of cultural pluralism by absorbing the different cultural sub-groups into the cultural patterns of the core unit. In such situation, nation-building takes the form of assimilation which regards cultural pluralism as being incompatible with the concept of a nation-state and stands for the cultural hegemony of the dominant group over all the other sub-cultural units. Integration, on the other hand, empha-

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<sup>36</sup>Sidney Verba, "Conclusion ...", in Lucian W. Pye and Sidney Verba (eds.), op. cit., 526.



sizes acculturation rather than deculturation as a means to bring about a common outlook overshadowing, but without eliminating, the various sub-cultural systems in a society. In other words, it does not call for the complete loss of sub-cultural orientations and identifications of the different cultural communities.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, the sense of national identity is one of the most important elements in a political culture. But it should be pointed out that although the extent to which individuals and groups defer to the claims of their political system is indicative of their sense of loyalty and attachment to the national community, this deference may exist as a result from threats of severe deprivations or coercion imposed by a politically and militarily dominant community rather than from normative consensus widely shared by political actors.

### Political Integration and Political Development

It has been suggested that it would be more accurate to describe the transitional societies as "unintegrated" than as "developing"<sup>37</sup> because at this stage of their political development "the primary function of government is one: the creation of national unity."<sup>38</sup> In their

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<sup>37</sup>Claude E. Welch, Jr., "Modernization and Social Integration", in his (ed.), op. cit., 147.

<sup>38</sup>A. F. K. Organski, op. cit., 8.





efforts to bring about rapid modernization, these states are facing a vast variety of destructive problems which make the continued cohesion of their societies the central concern of their governments. As pointed out by Robert Scott in a study of nation-building in Latin America,<sup>39</sup> "even a considerable level of economic modernization and mass communication may fail to produce effective mass participation, responsibility, and loyalty in Latin American politics as long as the elusive but crucial problems of identity and congruity are not being solved."<sup>40</sup> It would seem that the rapid modernization and development of these transitional societies depend a great deal on whether they have the ability to maintain themselves as viable nation-states in the face of the challenges posed by the so-called "integrative revolution".<sup>41</sup>

"Political development has been taken to mean many different things by different persons."<sup>42</sup> Without going into the details of the

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<sup>39</sup>Robert Scott, "Nation-Building in Latin America", in Karl W. Deutsch and William J. Foltz (eds.), op. cit., 73-83.

<sup>40</sup>Karl W. Deutsch, "Nation-Building and National Development", in idem and William J. Foltz (eds.), op. cit., 10.

<sup>41</sup>See Clifford Geertz, op. cit., 105-157. Geertz sees the confrontation between primordial and civil sentiments as a serious threat to the integrity and survival of the transitional societies.

<sup>42</sup>William J. Siffin, "Introduction" in John D. Montgomery and William J. Siffin (eds.), Approaches to Development: Politics, Administration



various definitions, it may be useful here to look at political development as an increase in the problem-solving and change-sustaining capabilities of a political system.<sup>43</sup> Based on Almond and Powell,<sup>44</sup> one can identify four types of developmental challenges or problems which a political system must have the capabilities to solve or accommodate if it is to maintain itself for continued growth without losing

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and Change (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 6. For some useful critiques of the various definitions of political development, see Samuel P. Huntington, "Political Development and Political Decay", op. cit., 386-393; idem, Political Order in Changing Societies, op. cit., 1-78; Alfred Diamant, "Political Development: Approaches to Theory and Strategy", in John D. Montgomery and William J. Siffin (eds.), ibid., 15-47; Lucian W. Pye, Aspects ..., op. cit., 31-48; Fred W. Riggs, "The Theory of Political Development", in James C. Charlesworth (ed.), Contemporary Political Analysis (New York: The Free Press, 1967), 317-349; Karl von Vorys, "Toward a Concept of Political Development", Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, 358 (March 1965), 14-19; and R. S. Milne, "Political Modernization in Malaysia", Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies, 7, 1 (March 1969), 3-20.

<sup>43</sup> Many writers on political development seem to agree on this point. See, for example, Gabriel A. Almond, "Political Systems and Political Change", The American Behavioral Scientist, 6 (June 1963), 3-10. Almond sees political development as "the acquisition of a new capability, in the sense of a specialized role structure and differentiated orientations which together give a political system the possibility of responding efficiently, and more or less automatically, to a new range of problems" (p. 8). See also, Alfred Diamant, in Montgomery and Siffin (eds.), op. cit., 25-28; and Lucian W. Pye, "Introduction", in his (eds.), Communication and Political Development (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 3-23. Pye holds that the political system not only solves problems, it also must "cope with insoluble issues, and it must provide people with a sense of identity and of fundamental memberships in a larger community" (p. 16).

<sup>44</sup> Gabriel A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell, Jr., op. cit., 34-41, 314-322.





its cohesion and identity.<sup>45</sup> The first of these is the challenge of state-building: the creation of a national central authority and the establishment of a centralized bureaucracy. At this stage of system development, the physical proportions, the geographic configuration, the legal limits, and the structure of the state within the nation is to be built are defined. As a result of a shift of the locus of authority and identification and the penetration of the central bureaucratic structure, traditional and regional centers of power such as tribal chiefs, petty princes and other primordial attachments based on blood, race, religion, or language, gradually lose their "coerciveness" and functions of social integration to a single, secular, national political authority and the centralized bureaucratic structure.

Closely related to the problem of state-building is the challenge of nation-building - the problem of investing disparate communities or groups within the political system with a consciousness and sense of national identity as well as a national consensus regarding

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<sup>45</sup> Writers on political development differ as to the types of challenges a political system must face throughout all the stages of its development. Lucian W. Pye identifies these challenges as the crises of identity, legitimacy, penetration, participation, and distribution (see his Aspects of Political Development, op. cit., 62-67). A. F. K. Organski emphasizes the problems of unification, industrialization, welfare and abundance (see supra, note 7), whereas Claude E. Welch, Jr., calls attention to the challenges of centralization of power, differentiation and specialization of political structures, and popular participation (see his "The Comparative Study of Political Modernization", in his (ed.), op. cit., 3-14).



political fundamentals. In fact, the two processes of state- and nation-building are intimately interrelated and may take place simultaneously.<sup>46</sup> Conceptually, however, it is useful to keep them separate and distinct. The problem of state-building calls for an increase in the regulative and extractive capabilities of the political system, which is primarily structural change, whereas the problem of nation-building involves a subjective change in the ultimate object of individual identification, which is largely cultural and attitudinal. Changes in the regulative and extractive capabilities of a political system may be secured by coercion without the accompanying change in individual attitudes of identification. The Austro-Hungarian Empire shows that the creation of centralized and penetrative bureaucracies was not followed by the emergence of a homogeneous pattern of loyalty and commitment to the central political community.

The third type of system-development problems is the expansion of popular participation in politics. The decline of primordial attachments, the gradual increase in individual commitment to, and involvement in, the larger national community, and the growth of political infrastructures, all contribute to increasing the volume and intensity of demands from groups and individuals in the society for a share

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<sup>46</sup> See Arnold Rivkin, "The Politics of Nation-Building: Problems and Preconditions," Journal of International Affairs, 16, 2 (1962), 131-143. Nation-building in Rivkin's sense is meant to cover the problem of state-building.



in the decision-making function of the political system. These demands require an increase in the capabilities of the system to provide greater sensitivity to the principle of equality, greater responsiveness to popular pressure, better channels for political communication, and greater structural differentiation and functional specification of all the participating institutions and organizations. As "the influx of new participants creates serious strains on the existing institutions ... the continuity of the old polity is broken and there is the need to reestablish the entire structure of political relations."<sup>47</sup>

Finally, the fourth type of challenge to the development process is posed by the problem of distribution or welfare. This problem arises from the demands of groups and individuals that the power of the political system is to be used to control or influence the distribution of economic resources, social status, and political power among different elements of the population. Redistribution of welfare and resources entails further structural changes and the reshaping of group attitudes and expectations and their advantages and disadvantages. A sudden and rapid increase in the volume and intensity of distributive demands often puts a political system of low-level capability under serious stress. This is especially the case in a

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<sup>47</sup>Lucian W. Pye, Aspects of Political Development, op. cit., 65.





culturally plural society where the degree of modernity and mobilization and the line between the rich and the poor coincide with communal differences. In such a society, distribution of economic and political resources is bound to be the object of communal conflict. In Malaysia, for example, the Chinese and Indians are antagonised by Malay efforts to strengthen the cultural, political and economic position of the Malays.

It can be seen from these four developmental challenges that there are numerous ways in which a political system can fall apart. For example, the inability of a political system to adapt itself structurally and culturally to the problems of state- and nation-building may lead to the breakup of the central national authority through civil wars and partitions. On the other hand, a successful solution to one type of the developmental challenges often creates for the government new demands and tasks whose solution calls for a higher level of integration of the political system. Furthermore, the problem-solving capabilities of a political system at one stage of its development depend heavily on the extent to which it has successfully confronted the challenges at an earlier stage. All these point to the need of political integration because the pattern of political development, its success and its failure, are dependent to a great extent on the level of integration a political system has previously achieved.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>See Leonard Binder, op. cit., 622-631.



Historically speaking, state- and nation-building preceded popular participation in politics and distribution of welfare. In other words, territorial and national integration was accomplished before process integration took place. In Britain, for example, the challenges of state- and nation-building were solved incrementally over a period of several centuries before she confronted, and solved incrementally the problems of participation and distribution in the course of the last three hundred years.<sup>49</sup> In contrast, in the transitional societies, demands for territorial integrity, national unity, participation, economic betterment, and law and order call for immediate and simultaneous solution. The result is the cumulative revolutions which overload and create serious strains on these transitional polities. This situation greatly enhances the possibility of political decay and "modernization breakdowns" in these societies.<sup>50</sup>

Due to a gradual awareness of better conditions in other countries, the rallying cry which led to independence, the efforts of

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<sup>49</sup>Gabriel A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell, Jr., op. cit., 314-322.

<sup>50</sup>See S. N. Eisenstadt, "Breakdowns of Modernization", Economic Development and Cultural Change, 12 (July 1964), 345-367; idem, Modernization: Protest and Change (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966), 129-161; Manfred Halpern, "Toward Further Modernization of the Study of New Nations", World Politics, 17 (October 1964), 177; Jason L. Finkle and Richard W. Gable (eds.), Political Development and Social Change (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1968), 551 ff; Charles C. Moskos, Jr., and Wendell Bell, "Cultural Unity and Diversity in New States", Teachers College Record, 16, 8 (May 1965), 679-694; and Fred W. Riggs, in James C. Charlesworth (ed.), op. cit., 342-349.





political elites to unite a fragmented society with them at the head, and the initial experience with economic development and social mobilization (such as urbanization, industrialization, the introduction of mass education, the diffusion of the mass media, and the development of increasingly efficient and productive commercial and transportation network), groups of all types in the transitional societies have become politically activated, and have made their demands on their political systems far greater than can be accommodated in the short run. As political demands in these societies are often defined predominantly in terms of tribe, race, religion, communal reference group, or other primordial attachments, they are, in most cases, not amenable to aggregation and the bargaining process. In many of these states, what constitutes the basis of national identity is itself an issue of serious controversy, not to mention a host of other problems concerning participation and distribution. Group rivalry and conflict are a common phenomenon in every political system ; but in a society where the general feeling among citizens and groups is that achieving their own "special" interests is more important than preserving the larger political community in which they live, inter-group conflict is both divisive and disintegrative. However, as pointed out by one recent study, "inter-group conflict is seldom a product of simple cultural diversity" in the transitional societies. It is "traceable di-

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rectly to the widening of social horizons and to the process of modernization at work within the national boundaries" because "modernization, far from destroying communalism, in time both reinforces communal conflict and creates the conditions for the formation of entirely new communal groups."<sup>51</sup> The basic reasons for the emergence of such social tensions in the course of political development and modernization in the transitional societies can be none other than the lack of vertical identification of the diverse groups with the larger political entities and the low capacity of these groups to identify with one another and imagine themselves living in a different situation.<sup>52</sup>

In short, political development and modernization can hardly be achieved without mobilizing the support of the human resources of the transitional societies "for new patterns of socialization and behavior"<sup>53</sup> and the reorientation of groups and individuals to a new

<sup>51</sup> Robert Melson and Howard Wolpe, op. cit., 1113. See also Max F. Millikan and Donald L. M. Blackmer (eds.), The Emerging Nations: Their Growth and United States Policy (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1961), 3-42; W. Howard Wriggins, "Impediments to Unity in the New Nations: The Case of Ceylon", American Political Science Review, 55, 2 (June 1961), 313-320; and Richard H. Pfaff, "Disengagement from Traditionalism in Turkey and Iran", Western Political Quarterly, 16, 1 (March 1963), 79-98.

<sup>52</sup> Daniel Lerner calls this capacity as "empathy". See his The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East (New York: The Free Press, 1958), 47-52.

<sup>53</sup> Karl W. Deutsch, "Social Mobilization and Political Development", American Political Science Review, 55, 3 (September 1961), 493-514. Deutsch defines "social mobilization" as "the process in which major



and non-traditional base of legitimacy and to a new system of rewards and paths to rewards consistent with the dynamics of a modern, interdependent economy. In order that these human resources can be effectively mobilized for the task of modernization and development, the regulative and extractive capabilities of the political system must have their support bases embodied in a consensus widely shared by the population. Without a minimum consensus, individuals' willingness to obey laws and to provide regularized economic activity to support the modernizing effort of the political elites cannot be ensured. Of course, passive and obedient participation can be obtained by force and coercion; but forceful means may be very costly, inefficient, unreliable, and self-defeating. Therefore, to ensure the predictability, regularity and tractability of political demands and supports, passive compliance and obedience should be transformed into active support and affection for the larger national community by encouraging a general sense of belonging and attachment among individuals and groups. As mentioned earlier, while the feeling of trust, confidence and acceptance among individuals and groups greatly enhances horizontal unity and facilitates the peaceful exercise of political authority and orderly pattern of political change, it is the sense of national identity that legitimizes the actions of the political elites and makes it possible

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clusters of old social, economic and psychological commitments are eroded or broken and people become available for new patterns of socialization and behavior." Ibid., 494.





for them to mobilize mass support and commitment to their programs of development. Thus, "the development of a clear and unambiguous sense of identity is more than a facilitating factor in the creation of a nation; it may be in some sense the major constituting factor of a new nation."<sup>54</sup>

### The Integrative Crisis in Malaysia

The pattern of social groupings is one of the important factors that determine to a great degree the pattern of political culture of a political system.<sup>55</sup> On the basis of the rigidity and consistency of group identification with which social sub-units divide the population of a society, three patterns of grouping can be identified: monistic, pluralistic and communal.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Sidney Verba, "Conclusion ...", in Pye and Verba (eds.), op. cit., 530. "Political development", Leonard Binder writes, "is not only dependent upon integration in the sense that the possible types of political systems which may emerge are the consequence of degrees of failure in integration; successful integration may also result in diverse types of developed political systems. It may even be possible that integration will take place without material or administrative development." Op. cit., 623.

<sup>55</sup> See Richard E. Dawson and Kenneth Prewitt, Political Socialization (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1969), 184-185; and Gerald Bender, "Political Socialization and Political Change", Western Political Quarterly, 20, 2 (June 1967), 390-407.

<sup>56</sup> A number of writers has referred to the communal type of social grouping as either cellular or plural. See, for example, E. H. G.



A monistic pattern of society is based on the concept of utmost social unity and harmony. In such a society, all groups and individuals are subject to the supremacy of the national community which stands for the common good. The political culture of a monist society is thus homogeneous and characterized by unity with order and harmony. The ideal type of a monist society is one in which every citizen rejoices and sorrows at the same happening. In the empirical world, however, no society has ever achieved the state of utmost unity and harmony among groups and individuals.

The social configuration of a society is said to be pluralistic if it is made up of overlapping groups and of individuals who belong to many groups at once. In such a society, social groupings are formed on a voluntary basis and no individual is ever wholly affiliated with any one of the groups. The political system in a pluralistic society plays the role of a broker among groups, acting only upon the common denominator of group concurrence. Public policies are accepted as binding on all groups because they are the results of their own free interaction. The fact that in a pluralistic society, indivi-

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Dobby, Southeast Asia, 6th Edition (London: London University Press, 1958), 132; J. S. Furnivall, Colonial Policy and Practice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), 304; K. J. Ratnam, "Constitutional Government and the 'Plural' Society", Journal of Southeast Asian History, 2, 3 (October 1961), 1-13; and Kenneth A. Heard, Political Systems in Multi-Racial Societies (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1961), 13-15. See also Rupert Emerson, From Empire to Nation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), 329-359. However, the term communal is preferred in this study.





duals who belong to different groups by birth or other primordial attachments for most aspects of their life may nevertheless find themselves part of the same interest group for some important purposes they all share, contributes greatly to the flexibility and pragmatism of group outlooks. The binding force of parochial sentiments is minimized by the phenomenon of overlapping membership in social groups and individuals' multiple allegiances, and no group can mobilize the all-out support of all its members. As a result, political conflicts are mitigated to a considerable extent and they are often amenable to compromise and the bargaining processes.

A communal society, on the other hand, is one in which the social sub-units serve as ultimate reference points for individuals' understanding of the political world. According to one definition, a "community" is

a group of persons living in a given country or locality, having a race, religion, language, and traditions of their own, and united by this identity of race, religion, language, and traditions in a sentiment of solidarity, with a view to preserving their traditions, maintaining their form of worship, ensuring the instruction and upbringing of their children in accordance with the spirit and traditions of their race, and rendering mutual assistance to each other.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>This definition was given by the Permanent Court of International Justice in its advisory opinion on the Greco-Bulgarian Communities (1930). As quoted in L. C. Green, International Law Through the Cases (London: Stevens and Sons, 1959), 342.



Thus, a communal group is, in many ways, comparable to a monist society in miniature. It is not only defined by such identifications and sentiments as race, religion, language and traditions, but also encompasses "the full range of demographic (age and sex) divisions within the wider society" and social patterns affecting the entire life cycle of the individuals.<sup>58</sup> At the same time, communal groups also tend to be differentiated on the basis of wealth, status and power. In short, a communal society consists of groups split into mutually exclusive compartments. Group differences coincide and reinforce each other and tend to be cumulative. Social interactions seldom take place beyond the boundaries of each of the communities, as overlapping membership in secondary organizations is rare. The degree of mobilization one communal group can muster is usually high because the sense of horizontal identification among members of the same community is stronger than that among members of different communities. As a result, the outlooks of communal groups tend to be ascriptive and rigid; and once political conflicts among communities arise, they tend to be tense, destructive and persistent.

The differences between a pluralistic and a communal social system, it should be pointed out, are due to the different degrees of integration both systems have attained. A pluralistic society is

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<sup>58</sup>See Robert Melson, Howard Wolpe, op. cit., 1112.



marked by a strong sense of trust, confidence and acceptance among individuals and groups, and a broad consensus on political fundamentals within which group rivalries and competition take place. Its political culture is thus flexible and pragmatic. On the other hand, the political culture of a communal society is fragmented along the lines of race, language, religion, traditions, and other primordial sentiments. The areas of shared orientations among political actors in a communal society is small, as a communal society has as many different sub-cultures as the number of communities it embraces. Each community is united with a view to preserving its traditions, maintaining its cultural patterns, and perpetuating its distinctive characteristics. As the level of horizontal identification with one's fellow citizens and the level of vertical identification with the national community in a communal society are low, the urge of each community to preserve its traditions, maintain its cultural patterns, and perpetuate its distinctive characteristics may give rise to communalism - a state of affairs where each community becomes politically assertive and puts its own interests and values first even if, in so doing, it encroaches upon the interests and values of other communities and hinders the growth of national unity or integration. If communalism becomes assertive, it replaces the processes of bargaining and compromise as the dominant force in politics.

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The pattern of social grouping in the Federation of Malaysia is typically a communal one. Men in this country are set apart from each other by more than what binds them together. The political culture of Malaysia is fragmented into a number of communal sub-cultures mutually differentiated on the grounds of race, language, religion, traditions, customs and ways of life. These divisions are further reinforced and accentuated by communal specialization of economic and political roles, settlement pattern, external attraction, socio-economic classes, regional ties, ideologies, secondary organizations, communication media, pattern of political socialization and past political experiences. Therefore,

Divided from each other in almost every aspect, the peoples of Malaya have in common essentially only the fact that they live in the same country. In race, religion, language, culture, economic interests, and the other attributes usually associated with the existence of a nation, their outstanding characteristic is not unity but profound diversity.<sup>59</sup>

No doubt, as a transitional society of such profound diversity, Malaysia is experiencing "an integrative crisis of the first order."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Rupert Emerson, "Forward" in Frank H. King, The New Malayan Nation: A Study of Communalism and Nationalism (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1957), v. Emerson's observation remains true in today's Malaysia, a larger Federation formed in September 1963.

<sup>60</sup>Felix V. Gagliano, Jr., Political Input Functions in the Federation of Malaysia (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Illinois, 1967), 40.



Like other transitional societies, Malaysia is facing a cumulative revolution of political development and modernization. As a communal society, she is also beset with primordial conflicts. Communalism, rather than national consensus, "colors the entire political scene" of Malaysia and at every turn provides serious impediments to the goals of national unity and integration.<sup>61</sup>

Undoubtedly, Malaysia has already gone through the stage of state-building, although bureaucratic penetration from the central authority is less thorough and complete in East Malaysia and some areas in the east coast of West Malaysia than in the rest of the country.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, it would seem that the success of state-building in the two Borneo states in East Malaysia depends a great deal on the direction of the nation-building policy of the central government. An assimilationist and interventionist approach in East Malaysia might add strength to the tendency toward secession, while a policy of accommodation and compromise might bring about integration.

The formal aspects of the participation crisis in Malaysia seem to have been resolved as every citizen is supposed to have an

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<sup>61</sup>See Robert O. Tilman, "Malaysia: The Problems of Federation", Western Political Quarterly, 16, 4 (December 1963), 903.

<sup>62</sup>See R. S. Milne, op. cit., for a brief but excellent discussion of the problems of political development and modernization in Malaysia.





equal opportunity to elect representatives to the federal as well as state legislatures and to engage in political activities through membership in political parties. This should not, however, be taken to mean that the challenge of participation in Malaysia has been successfully confronted. On the one hand, political participation has been limited by considerations relating to internal security and Communist activities. These considerations have been so loosely interpreted that they have been used to deny the opponents of the ruling party a share of political participation. The fact that the government is vested with the power to deprive the non-Malays of their citizenship previously obtained through registration or naturalization imposes another limitation on the freedom of political participation. On the other hand, the responsiveness of the Malaysian political system to non-Malay demands for participatory equality has also been limited by the political preponderance of the Malay community and its determination to maintain and perpetuate this dominance. The ban on the public questioning of the "sensitive issues" as embodied in the constitution (amendment) white paper published on January 22, 1971 is one of the major examples of such limitations. Moreover, a national system of participating and articulating structures through which the various communities can be brought into meaningful interactions and participation has not emerged in the Malaysian scene despite the exis-

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tence of the Alliance Party.<sup>63</sup> At the same time, there are very few effective and autonomous interest groups and "except perhaps for the labor unions, associational interest structures have little to no influence on the political process."<sup>64</sup> Generally speaking, the lower class sub-cultures of the Malaysian population have the least access to the established channels of articulation, aggregation and authoritative decision. This is particularly true in the case of the non-Malay lower classes and the vernacular-educated non-Malay elites. Such a situation produces a deepening sense of injustice, deprivation and insecurity among the non-Malays and reinforces their view that they have been treated as second-class citizens. As a

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<sup>63</sup>Consisting of three communal partners - the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) - the Alliance Party has been regarded by its leaders as the only national channel through which the three major communities can get access to the political process. In fact, however, "there is no 'Alliance' except at the top. The separate parties go their own way, perpetuate their own jealousies, indiscretions, communal demands ... without regard to their so-called partners. There is little contact at the lower branch level. ... UMNO youth, for example, has little if any contact with MCA youth at the local levels. The government's attempts to obscure the communal issue have really worked in some cases to intensify communalism and to prevent the integration of the communities." Jean Grossholtz, "The Rise and Demise of Konfrontasi: Impact on Politics in Malaysia", Asian Studies, 6, 3 (December 1968), 338.

<sup>64</sup>Felix V. Gagliano, Jr., op. cit., 207. Gagliano also points out that although Malaysia is primarily an agricultural country, the voice of peasants and farmers is hardly to be heard and so is the voice of urban industrial workers aside from a small number of them who are unionized (ibid., 207-208).



result, "these groups, especially the urban Chinese workers, are ... most likely to participate in sporadic anomic activity."<sup>65</sup>

The extractive and regulative capabilities of the Malaysian polity are relatively higher than many of its neighbors in Southeast Asia. Malaysia is thus better equipped to cope with the crisis of distribution in the course of its political development. However, like the participation crisis, the problem of distribution in Malaysia is dominated by the primacy of communal considerations. Demands for distribution and welfare in Malaysia arise mainly from the phenomenon of wealth and cultural disparities between the advanced and the backward sectors of the country and the needs for building an independent and self-sustaining economy and creating employment opportunities to meet the demands of an increasingly mobilized population. Unfortunately, the gaps between the rich and the poor, between the advanced and the backward, between the urban and the rural, and between the modern and the traditional, coincide largely with communal divisions. As a result, the problems of participation and distribution in Malaysia, unlike those in Japan or China, cannot be treated purely as problems of mobilization and modernization; they should also be treated as communal problems as well. As they exist in today's Malaysia, they take the form of a conflict between the

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<sup>65</sup>Felix V. Gagliano, Jr., op. cit., 209.





Malay demands for political supremacy and special privileges and the non-Malay demands for political equality and full acceptance. Both demands are so diametrically opposed that a response of the political system to any one of them is bound to lead members of a certain communal group or groups to consider the elites as hostile elements because they refuse their demands or to consider other demanding communal group or groups as enemies because the latter's demands change the terms on which groups compete for opportunities, wealth and power. This shows that both crises - participation and distribution - are closely intertwined with the problems of creating a Malaysian nationhood. It would seem that not until the problem of nation-building is resolved can a satisfactory solution to these crises be found.

During the colonial era, the British government in Malaya did not seek to create a common national culture of loyalty and commitment. It was content to establish a form of political control for the extraction of the resources of the country, while, on the one hand, positively protecting the traditional ways of life of the Malay population as sons of the soil and the political privileges of the Malay aristocracies as the rulers of the Malay states and, on the other, permitting the non-Malay immigrants to undertake the task of exploiting and expanding the mineral and agricultural resources of the peninsula and to retain their cultural autonomy. It would seem that during

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the period of British rule, "the single tie that bound Malaya together was the economic motivation of all her residents except the Malay component."<sup>66</sup> However, "this common economic factor had not provided a national life in the real sense of the word."<sup>67</sup> Although the creation of a national identity among the communal groups has been one of the major preoccupations of the political elites ever since the end of the Second World War, the crisis of nation-building in this country still remains to be resolved. In fact, in today's Malaysia, not only is the way to forge national integration in dispute, but also "what Malaysian identity should mean is still ambiguous and a topic of political controversy."<sup>68</sup>

As seen earlier, the pattern of social groupings in Malaysia is communal. This factor and the fact that Malaysia is also a transitional society seeking for the rapid mobilization of human and natural resources for the task of political and economic modernization have added complexities to the problem of national integration in this country. In the first place, it is the characteristic of a communal society that both the horizontal ties among the members of the different

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<sup>66</sup>Virginia Thompson, Postmortem in Malaya (New York: Macmillan, 1943), 15.

<sup>67</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>68</sup>Felix V. Gagliano, Jr., op. cit., 300.





communities and the vertical ties of the different communities with the larger national community are either very weak, ambiguous, or non-existent. In Malaysia, whatever horizontal ties the members of the different communities have with one another are mostly functional and nominal rather than personal and emotional. Most importantly, all citizens of Malaysia do not, in their perceptions, enjoy an equal status. The Malays tend to see themselves as bumiputra (sons of the soil) while looking upon the Chinese and Indians as orang-orang tum-pangan (lodgers) or aliens whose position and rights in Malaysia are given to them by the bumiputra. Furthermore, the Malays and the non-Malays also tend to see one another through a set of preconceived stereotypes rather than through actual experience and direct contact. These preconceived expectations produce the self-fulfilling prophecy of communally-oriented behavior and hinder progress toward mutual understanding.

As regards vertical ties, it is true that the different communities in Malaysia have now become attached to the country; but the nature and degree of this attachment vary from one community to another depending on their own perceptions of their status in the society. The Malays tend to see Malaysia as their tanah ayer (fatherland) and themselves as bumiputra enjoying special rights and status, whereas the Chinese and Indians tend to treat Malaysia as their permanent home-

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land and see themselves as citizens of the country who have been denied an equal status they are entitled to purely because they are not Malay. The natives in East Malaysia, on the other hand, tend to have greater attachment to their particular regions than to Malaysia as a whole and regard themselves more as Sabahans or Sarawakians than as Malaysians.

In the second place, the integrative crisis in Malaysia has been intensified by the claim of the Malay community that due to the fact of prior residence, it should be recognized by all communities as the core cultural unit and be accepted as the model of nation-building in the country. Since such a claim calls for the deculturization of all the non-indigenous communities and their absorption into the cultural patterns of the Malay community, it amounts to the assertion of the cultural hegemony of the Malay community. The mere fact that a society comprises a number of culturally distinct communities may not be a disintegrative factor because cultural diversity and group multiplicity are also an outstanding characteristic of a pluralistic society. However, the phenomenon of multiple communities divided along primordial lines becomes extremely destructive as soon as one community insists on imposing its values and cultural patterns on the rest of the society. Communalism begets communalism and the attempt to achieve cultural hegemony by one community is bound

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to arouse inter-group fear, suspicion, distrust, and open conflicts. In Malaysia, the assertion of Malay supremacy is handicapped by two factors. First, no single community in Malaysia commands a numerical majority. Second, the cultural model of the Malay community lacks both utilitarian and identitive appeals to the Chinese and Indians who tend to see the acceptance of the Malay cultural model as a retrogression to a less efficient order of things. Despite these difficulties, the Malay community has under its command the coercive power of the political system. Such a situation does not facilitate peaceful adjustment. On the contrary, it enhances the prospect of communal conflicts and violence.

In the third place, the integrative crisis in Malaysia has also been complicated by the economic imbalances, the different degrees of modernity, and the uneven distribution of political and military powers among the various communities. In a transitional society where there is no great difference in the degree of modernity among the various component sub-cultures and where all these sub-cultures are indigenous, the development of a pool of normative consensus regarding political behavior may be achieved through modernization - the mobilization of the traditional masses to commit to modern values, the creation of non-traditional bases of legitimacy, and the provision of new sets of values to initiate and sustain economic modernization.

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In fact, as pointed out by Clifford Geertz, "the integrative revolution does not do away with ethnocentrism; it merely modernizes it."<sup>69</sup> In Malaysia, however, due to the dominant position of Malay political culture and the fact that the gaps between the traditional and the modern and between the poor and the rich coincide largely with the division between the bumiputra and the non-bumiputra, the integrative revolution appears to be less an issue of disengaging the masses from traditionalism than a question of assimilating the Chinese and the Indians into the cultural patterns of the Malay community. To establish a Malay nation, it has been considered necessary to reinforce the traditional aspects of Malay-Muslim culture. To correct the situation of economic imbalance, the Malay community as a whole, rather than the backward sector of the society, has been given special privileges and rights. In other words, the Malay elites are attempting to do away with non-Malay ethnocentrism by promoting Malay ethnocentrism. They are trying to adjust the realities of a multi-racial, multicultural and multilingual society to fit their preconceived plan of building a Malay nation. As noted earlier, communalism begets communalism. Such a monocultural solution - which is close to what Apter has called a "political religion" solution<sup>70</sup> - is bound

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<sup>69</sup> Clifford Geertz, op. cit., 154.

<sup>70</sup> See David E. Apter, "Political Religion in the New Nations", in Clifford Geertz (ed.), op. cit., 57-104; and Apter's The Politics of Modernization (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 266ff.



to be resisted by the non-Malay communities.

Moreover, the process of political and economic change at work in Malaysia also creates competitions and strains among the communities. As a result of social mobilization, more and more people come to desire and demand more services, more recognition, more acceptance, more wealth or more power. While the different communities did not deal directly with each other and played complementary roles during the period of British rule, they now come to deal with each other face-to-face and to desire and demand for the same interests. Under the new situation, one man's or one community's failure is attributable to another man's or another community's success. "In the short term", Melson and Wolpe observe, "the reduction of communal imbalances in wealth, status or power may serve to intensify communal antagonisms."<sup>71</sup> This is true in Malaysia. The greater the number of Malays becomes educationally, politically or economically mobilized, the greater their impatience with the remaining communal imbalances and the slow pace of the Malayization effort. On the other hand, the greater the number of non-Malays becomes resocialized as citizens of Malaysia, the greater their dissatisfaction with the hard reality of Malay political dominance and the policy of making Malaysia a Malay country.

Ever since the 1920's, the integrative crisis in Malaya

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<sup>71</sup>Robert Melson and Howard Wolpe, op. cit., 1117.





(and now Malaysia) has consistently centered around the fundamental conflict between the Malay demand for a Malay country and the non-Malay demand for a non-communal nation. This conflict gave rise to many political crises in the history of the peninsula; but due to the combined support of the Malay aristocratic and non-aristocratic elites and the British, these crises had formally been resolved in a manner favorable to the principle of Malay supremacy. However, such a solution has not satisfied the non-Malay communities. In recent years, the number of non-Malays who repudiate such a solution has been increasing and they have become more assertive. In its present form, the integrative crisis in Malaysia is expressed in the conflict between the Malay demand for a Malay Malaysia and the non-Malay demand for a Malaysian Malaysia. It would seem that unless such a conflict is reasonably settled, orderly patterns of political change are likely to be handicapped.

This study deals with the Malaysian integrative crisis as expressed in the conflict between the concept of a Malay Malaysia and the idea of a Malaysian Malaysia. It is divided into four parts. The two chapters of Part I introduce the readers to the concept of political integration and the present communal setting of the Malaysian society. Part II, which consists of three chapters, gives a historical account of the evolution of Malay supremacy, the impact of British rule

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on the emergence of the communal social patterns, and the present constitutional framework of a Malay Malaysia. The impacts of the demise of the Malayan Union scheme, the Japanese occupation and the Emergency on communal relations in Malaysia are also evaluated in Part II. Part III assesses the role and value of the Alliance formula as a nation-building device in Malaysia and analyzes the problems and difficulties facing the Malayization effort. In Part IV, the origin of the concept of a Malaysian Malaysia is briefly traced and its prospect and viability as an alternative to Malayization are examined. It should be pointed out that this study is focused mainly on politics in peninsular Malaysia and the communal relations of the three major communal groups - the Malay, the Chinese and the Indian - with special emphasis on Malay-Chinese differences. Unless otherwise specified or implied, the term "non-Malays" used throughout this study means to include only the Chinese and the Indians (including Pakistanis and Ceylonese).

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## CHAPTER II

### THE COMMUNAL SETTING OF MALAYSIA

This introductory chapter surveys the communal setting of the Malaysian political system. Focus is upon those factors which divide the communities into various sub-cultural compartments and make communalism the dominant force in Malaysian politics.

#### Demographic Distribution and Communalism

The Malaysian population can be classified into five distinct categories: Malay, Chinese, Indian, Indigenous, and "Others". As Table 2.1 shows, no single communal group commands an absolute majority. The Malays, constituting 44 percent of the total population, possess, nevertheless, a popular plurality. In recent years, it has been the practice of the Malay-dominated government to list the Malays and the indigenous tribes (8.5 percent) together under the single category called Indigenous or bumiputra (sons of the soil).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Recent official figures do not give as complete a breakdown as is given here. In fact, communal figures and categories in today's Malaysia are as sensitive as any other communal issues. The fact





Table 2.1  
Population of Malaysia by Communal Group<sup>a</sup>

	Malaya	Sarawak	Sabah	Total	% of Total
Malay <sup>b</sup>	3,616,000	137,000	1,700	3,754,700	44.0
Chinese	2,670,000	243,000	110,000	3,023,000	36.0
Indian <sup>c</sup>	813,000	2,400	3,200	818,600	9.5
Indigenous				716,000	8.5
Iban <sup>d</sup>	---	246,000	---	246,000	
Bidayuh <sup>d</sup>	---	61,000	---	61,000	
Melanau	---	46,000	---	46,000	
Kadazan <sup>d</sup>	---	---	152,000	152,000	
Bajau	---	---	63,000	63,000	
Murut	---	---	22,000	22,000	
Others <sup>e</sup>	4,000	39,000	83,000	126,000	
Others	129,000	5,600	40,100	174,700	2.0
	7,232,000	780,000	475,000	8,487,000	100.0

<sup>a</sup>This table was taken from Felix V. Gagliano, Jr., Political Input Functions in the Federation of Malaysia (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Illinois, 1967), 16. It was originally based on The 1957 Population Census of the Federation of Malaya (Kuala Lumpur: Department of Statistics, 1960), the 1960 population census of Sarawak and Sabah and Malaysia: Official Year Book (Kuala Lumpur: Government Press, 1964). This table is adopted because of its complete communal breakdown. The present estimated population of Malaysia is well over 10 million. See Malaysia Year Book 1970 (Kuala Lumpur: The Straits Times Press, 1970), 15.

<sup>b</sup>The term "Malay" is used here to refer to those of Malay racial stock including Indonesian immigrants (such as Javanese, Bandjereese, Boyanese, Bugis, Minanghabau, and many others) but excluding the Malayan aborigines (or Orang Asli).

<sup>c</sup>The "Indian" category includes Indians, Pakistanis and Ceylonese.

<sup>d</sup>Iban was formerly known as Sea Dayak; Bidayuh, as Land Dayah; and Kadazan, as Dusun.



<sup>e</sup>"Other Indigenous" includes the aborigines (about 20 different tribes) in Malaya; the Bukitans, Bisayans, Kadayans, Kalabits, Kayans, Kenyahs (Sabups and Sipengs), Kajangs (Sekapans, Kejamans, Lahanans, Punans, Tanjongs, and Kanowits), Lugats, Lisums, Penans, Sians, Tagals, Tabuns, Ukits in Sarawak; and the Kedayan, Orange Sunge, Bisayah, Sulu, Tidong and Sino-Native in Sabah. See Appendix "B" in the Report of the Commission of Enquiry, North Borneo and Sarawak (Kuala Lumpur: Government Press, 1962), 102.

A close numerical rival of the Malays is the Chinese community which forms 36 percent of the entire population. The Indian community constitutes the third significant group with 9.5 percent. The remaining 2 percent "Others" include Europeans, Eurasians, Jews, Filipinos, Siamese, and other minor groups.

It was suggested by some Malaysian politicians<sup>2</sup> that since no single community in Malaysia is numerically dominant, there might arise a situation of the balance-of-power type, in which a shifting majority or coalition majority would work for the concurrent interests of all communities and frustrate the ambition or attempt of any single communal group for domination. The Alliance Party and the Alliance Government were given as examples. This view, however, overlooks the

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that Lee Kuan Yew's reference to the numerical strength of the various communities in 1965 in support of his argument for a Malaysian Malaysia was not tolerated by a section of the Malay community was one of the indications of this sensitivity. In his May 13: Before and After (Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Melayu Press Ltd., 1969), Tunku Abdul Rahman stated that "the combined population of the other races just falls short of half of the number of Malay population" (p. 141). Apparently, the indigenous tribes were included in the category "Malay" in Tunku's estimation.

<sup>2</sup>Through personal interviews with the writer in May 1968.





basic nature of a communal society. On the one hand, the sense of horizontal identification among members of the communities is weak. On the other, although all communities have now become attached to Malaysia as their homeland, their sense of vertical identification is not unified. As the national political process is dominated by, and identified with, the political sub-culture of the Malay community, the development of a common participant political culture is not encouraged. Under such a situation, a shifting majority emphasizing pragmatism and flexibility is unlikely to emerge. In fact, in a communal setting where the degree of group solidarity and mobilization is high, a minority in control of the instruments of suppression is often capable of assuming domination over the majority. Southern Rhodesia is one of the examples. In that country, the white group possesses a monopoly of political and military power despite its minority status.

It can also be seen from Table 2.1 that the non-Malays, if taken all together, outnumber the Malays. But if the Malays and the indigenous people are grouped together, the situation is reversed. Whereas the lining up of all non-Malay communities (especially the Chinese and the Indian) in opposition to Malay domination may be one of "the intriguing possibilities of the future",<sup>3</sup> the possibility

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<sup>3</sup>John A. MacDougall, Shared Burdens: A Study of Communal Discrimination by the Political Parties of Malaysia and Singapore (Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1968), 8.



of a Malay-Indigenous united front is still remote, despite the possible appeal of the idea of bumiputraism.

One may argue that cultural diversity in Malaysia is, in fact, much greater than the five broad categories of communities mentioned above might suggest. "While each of the three major communal blocs superficially appears as one to the outsiders", MacDougall observes, "each actually stands deeply divided within."<sup>4</sup> The category "Malay", for example, is not a unitary racial entity in any anthropometric sense. It includes not only the Melayu jati (genuine Malays) concentrated in eastern Sumatra and the Malayan peninsula, but also other Indonesians, including such diverse bangsa (races) as Javanese, Bandjerese, Boyanese, Bugis, Minangkabau, Mandiling, Ramba, Kepunohan and many others who came to settle in Malaysia from the Indonesian archipelago. In addition to these distinctions between bangsa and the various stereotypes which arise therefrom,<sup>5</sup> there are also marked regional dialect differences. "A west coast Malay finds great difficulty in understanding Malay as spoken in Trengganu and Kelantan."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>John A. MacDougall, op. cit., 8.

<sup>5</sup>See Peter J. Wilson, A Malay Village and Malaysia (New Haven: Hraf Press, 1967), 18-23. For example, one stereotype holds that Banjarese can never be trusted because they are seen as being prone to stealing and lying (ibid., 23).

<sup>6</sup>T. E. Smith, Population Growth in Malaya: Analysis of Recent Trends (London: Institute of International Affairs, 1952), 15. This difficulty seems to have been gradually overcome in recent years due to the popularization of such mass media as newspapers, radios, and televisions and the promotion and standardization of the national language.



There also exist divisions based on social status, economic position, place of residence<sup>7</sup> and political ideology as well as a split between the English-educated and the Malay-educated Malays. These cleavages and distinctions, however, should not be overstated. They are meaningful only in day-to-day affairs which involve Malays exclusively. "In any contact which involves a non-Malay, the distinctions vanish, and all Malays are equal in opposition to the non-Malay."<sup>8</sup>

The Chinese community in Malaysia appears to be more divided than the Malay. Differences of the Chinese dialects (see Table 2.2) and their place of origin in China split the Chinese population into many rival clan organizations and secret societies. The community is also divided along the lines of status, wealth, political ideology (i.e., left and right), and educational background (i.e., English-educated and Chinese-educated). This internal heterogeneity of the Chinese community does not, however, prevent the existence of "a strong sense of communal solidarity" among the Chinese.<sup>9</sup> For example, al-

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<sup>7</sup>See Norton Ginsburg and Chester F. Roberts, Jr., Malaya (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1958), 238-239.

<sup>8</sup>Peter J. Wilson, op. cit., 23.

<sup>9</sup>See Maurice Freedman, "The Growth of a Plural Society in Malaya", Pacific Affairs, 33, 2 (June 1960), 159; B. Maheswari, "Malaysia: the Politics in a Plural Society", Political Science Review (Jaipur), 3 (October 1964), 37-38; and Victor Purcell, The Chinese in Malaya (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1967), 119-234. Purcell's work was first published in 1948.





though there are conflicts over economic status and wealth, "those who have risen to the top of the capitalist world come from the same stocks as those who are sweating half-naked in the broiling sun, and feel some degree of kinship with them."<sup>10</sup> Dialect differences are generally regarded as one of the most serious cleavages among the Chinese and yet

The distinction between one dialect speaker and another is not of the same kind as the distinction between a Malay and a Chinese. All Chinese wish to master the written Chinese characters, to conform to certain universal Chinese contemporary practices hallowed by tradition, and to understand the motives of other Chinese. ... The Chinese in Malaya do not desire any schools in which the medium of instruction is a local dialect. The only desirable Chinese medium of instruction is the national language of China, even though not more than one per cent of the Chinese come from the part of China in which Gwoyu Mandarin is spoken in the home.<sup>11</sup>

Almost every Chinese is proud to be a Chinese. For generations, Chinese in British Malaya, as those in other parts of Southeast Asia,

<sup>10</sup> Rupert Emerson, Malaysia: A Study of Direct and Indirect Rule (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1964), 34. Emerson's study first appeared in 1937. See also Lea E. Williams, The Future of the Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 21; and J. M. Gullick, Malaya (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1964), 20.

<sup>11</sup> William H. Newell, Treacherous River: A Study of Rural Chinese in North Malaya (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1962), 5-6.



tended to regard themselves as hai-wai ku-erh (overseas orphans), as China provided no protection to their safety and interests. As a result of this, they have developed a high capacity for organization and a spirit of self-reliance and mutual help.<sup>12</sup>

There is no unitary "Indian race" in Malaysia either. The

Table 2.2

Community, Language and Religion in Malaysia

Community	Language or Dialect	Religion
Malay	Malay, Indonesian, Boyanese, Javanese, etc..	Muslim
Chinese	Mandarin, Hokkien, Cantonese, Teochew, Hakka, Hainanese, Henghua, Foochow, Leichow, etc..	Buddhist, Confucian-Taoist, Christian, Muslim, etc..
Indian	Tamil, Hindi, Punjabi, Malayalam, Telegu, Maharatti, Bengali, Marwari, Pushtu, Sindi, Sinhalese, etc..	Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian.
Indigenous	Malay, many tribal dialects.	Muslim, Animist, Christian, etc..
Others	English, Siamese, Filipino, European, etc..	Christian, Jews, Buddhist, Muslim, etc..

<sup>12</sup> Referring to this capacity of the Chinese in Southeast Asia, Guy Hunter states that "it is both a useful and a dangerous quality. It is useful for self-defence, for political pressure, and for





Indian segment of the Malaysian society includes members of both Aryan and Dravidian racial stocks such as Bengali, Malayalese, Punjabi, Sinhalese, and Tamils. Unlike "Malay" and "Chinese", the term "Indian" is not a common label used to refer to Indians by each other. Language is also divisive in the Indian community, with about 80 percent speaking Tamil and the remainder speaking a variety of the following dialects: Telegu, Malayalim, Punjabi, Maharatti, Hindi, Sindi, Bengali, Marwari, Pushtu, and Sinhalese. These linguistic divisions also coincide with differences in custom, social life, occupations, and places of residence in Malaysia. Although it is not pronounced, caste exclusiveness still exists.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the split between pro-Indian and pro-Pakistani groups corresponds with the religious division between Hinduism and Islam. The Indian community is thus the most heterogeneous and diverse among the three major communal blocs in Malaysia.

The Indigenous community in Sarawak, Sabah and the Malayan Peninsula comprises more than forty different tribal groups. These tribes do not speak the same language, believe in a single religion, or lead the same way of life. The only things they all have in com-

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commercial power. ... Yet the Chinese habit of organization is a major danger to race relationships. Few things enrage a majority more than to believe that a minority 'stick together!'. See his Southeast Asia: Race, Culture and Nation (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 43.

<sup>13</sup>See Rupert Emerson, op. cit., 34.



mon are their indigeneity to the country and their socio-economic and political backwardness. A number of the indigenous tribes in East Malaysia still resent the cruelties and injustice they suffered in previous times under the Malay sultan of Brunei. This bitter memory has kept alive a sense of suspicion and mistrust for the Malays.<sup>14</sup> The Orang Asli<sup>15</sup> in West Malaysia also suffered bitter treatment under the institution of slavery in the Malay states, which was not abolished until the twentieth century. The arbitrary camp settlements during the early stage of the Emergency also deepened the resentment of the aborigines against the Malays.<sup>16</sup>

Although the major communal blocs in Malaysia are not homogeneous internally, these internal divisions are far less important than the common characteristics by which distinctions are made among them. Owing to various recent developments in Malaysia, the use of Mandarin as a common language, and their long isolation from China, the Chinese community as a whole is closer to unity today than ever

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<sup>14</sup>See R. S. Milne, Government and Politics in Malaysia (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1967), 67-68.

<sup>15</sup>The term Orang Asli (original people) is now preferred by the Malaysian government instead of the more familiar "Aborigine". The latter is considered to have derogatory connotation. See The Straits Times, June 10, 1967, p. 7.

<sup>16</sup>See Alun Jones, "The Orang Asli: An Outline of Their Progress in Modern Malaya", Journal of Southeast Asian History, 9, 2 (September 1968), 286-305.



before. In other words, the sense of horizontal identification among members of the Chinese community has been strong and, due to the pressure of the Malay community and other changes (which will be discussed later in this study), it tends to become stronger than ever. On the other hand, the Malay masses, despite their internal differences, are held together by a strong sense of Malay identity, a common commitment to the Malay-Muslim culture and socialization process, a common rural-agrarian outlook, and a unified and penetrative political organization. Their horizontal identification with their fellow Malay-Muslims is no longer impeded by state loyalties and political apathy. They are no longer the passive masses believing that their special position as the sons of the soil had been well taken care of by the British and the Malay aristocracies. They are now politically mobilized by a common interest to defend their special rights and to see that Malaysia does really belong to them.

Meanwhile, the internal heterogeneity of the Indian community must not be exaggerated either. On the one hand, Tamils form about 80 percent of the total Indian population in Malaysia, while the remaining diverse groups are small in numbers. On the other hand, the great majority of the Malaysian Indians are now locally born. As a result, the common Tamil identity and the increasing identification of the Indian community as a whole with Malaysia may work to strengthen

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Indian solidarity in their common quest for a better political status in the country.<sup>17</sup> Finally, no common identity has yet developed among the major indigenous tribes in East Malaysia. Bumi-putraism may sound attractive as a basis for uniting the Malays and the indigenous peoples into a common political front; but the reality of Malay political predominance, and old resentment and new suspicion the latter bear against the former seem to be too great a barrier to overcome. On the other hand, the fact that East Malaysia is a viable "country" on its own may lead the various communities in this part of Malaysia (whose identification with the national community has not yet fully developed) to seek independence as a better assurance of their future and interests. According to John A. MacDougall, it seems probable that "an identity" among the various tribes in East Malaysia may "emerge from the antagonisms of Malaysian politics in opposition to the Muslims and in collaboration with a section of the Chinese."<sup>18</sup>

The numerical strengths of the various communal blocs in Malaysia seem to indicate that it would be difficult, if not impossible,

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<sup>17</sup> See Sinnappah Arasaratnam, Indians in Malaysia and Singapore (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 196-201.

<sup>18</sup> John A. MacDougall, op. cit., 8-9. In Sarawak, the 1970 elections (originally scheduled to be held in 1969 but postponed due to the May riots in Kuala Lumpur in that year) saw the disintegration of the Sarawak Alliance. In its place, a new coalition government between Parti Bumiputra (Muslim) and the Sarawak United People's Party (a largely Chinese dominated multi-communal party) was formed, giving rise to a situation in which the non-Malay and non-Muslim section of the indigenous community stands opposed to a mainly Malay-Muslim and Chinese alliance.



for one single community to assert its claim to be the core cultural unit of the society. Each of the major communal blocs (especially the Malay and the Chinese) has a high degree of internal solidarity vis-a-vis other communities. However, a high degree of horizontal identification among the members of a community does not give rise to the problem of communalism if the degree of identification across communities is also high. In Malaysia, the sentiment of cross-communal identification is very much weaker than that of communal solidarity. Therefore, to evaluate the problems of political integration in Malaysia, one needs to look beyond sheer numbers for other factors which split the various communities into exclusive compartments.

### Regional and Residential Cleavages

Communal homogeneity by region or residential area is usually an outstanding mark of a communal society. Such homogeneity tends to limit the opportunities for meaningful interactions among individuals across communal lines and hinder the growth of intercommunal ties and a common national outlook. In Malaysia, not only do the component territories - Malaya, Sarawak, and Sabah - appear to be three different systems, but the masses of the various communities are also domiciled apart, each having been able to perpetuate its own culture and way of life in a new replica of their ancestors' original

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homeland with little knowledge about what has been going on in other communities.

Regionally speaking, a different communal bloc predominates in each of the three Malaysian territories: the Malay, in Malaya; the Iban, in Sarawak; and the Kadazan, in Sabah. None of these predominant groups, however, constitutes an absolute majority either regionally or nationally. In the Malayan peninsula, the significant groups are the Malay, the Chinese and the Indian, in that order; in Sarawak, the Iban, the Chinese, and the Malay; and in Sabah, the Kadazan, the Muslims (the Malay, the Bajau and the majority of "Sabah Other Indigenous"), and the Chinese. On a national basis, only the Malays and the Chinese are significant in all three territories. The Indian community is significant only in Malaya; the Iban, only in Sarawak; and the Kadazan, only in Sabah.

In addition to the cleavages on communal distributions, each of the three territories has a different set of political history, party systems, articulation structures and mass media. Very few political elites overlap: each territory has its own political leaders, civil servants, and community leaders. Besides, there is a clear disparity in social, economic and political development between East and West Malaysia. Educational and economic resources, for example, are more developed in Malaya than in Sarawak and Sabah, resulting in a

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higher standard of living and a higher rate of literacy in the former. Political parties, political consciousness, political skills and other aspects of political culture are likewise more mature and developed in the mainland peninsula.<sup>19</sup> This uneven rate of development and modernity has given Malaya, and thus its dominant Malay component, a preponderance of political influence on the federal level. Right up to the departure of Singapore from the Federation in 1965, the educated portion of the indigenous communities in the two Borneo states was aroused by the idea of bumiputraism with expectation for sharing with the peninsular Malays the political and economic benefits of constitutional protections. This expectation was, and still remains, largely unfulfilled.<sup>20</sup> In recent years, this

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<sup>19</sup>For a discussion of the growth of political parties in Sarawak and Sabah and the degree of their "development", see R. S. Milne, "Political Parties in Sarawak and Sabah", Journal of Southeast Asian History, 6, 2 (September 1965), 104-117. Political parties were first formed in Sarawak in June 1959, and in Sabah, in December 1961. The aspects of structural differentiations, functional specification, and cultural secularization of the Malaysian political system are analyzed in idem, "Political Modernization in Malaysia", Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies, 7, 1 (March 1969), 9-15.

<sup>20</sup>John A. MacDougall (op. cit., 8-9) pointed out in his study that "At least till 1965, the tendency had seemed to be for the Iban and Kadazans to lean more toward the Malays and, on the basis of their common native identity, look forward to reaping the fruits of constitutionally guaranteed special privileges designed to help the sons of the soil advance to the level of the 'immigrant races'". Since then a series of political crises in both territories raised in the Iban and Kadazan educated elites serious doubts as to the willingness of the central government, particularly its dominant Muslim component,



unfulfilled expectation and repeated federal intervention in the affairs of the two states tended to accentuate the feeling of regional particularism and generate centrifugal forces in East Malaysia.<sup>21</sup>

Throughout Malaysia, residential segregation by community is easily detectable. About 96 percent of the Malay population resides in the mainland peninsula; the remainder live in Sarawak and Sabah. On a state-by-state basis, the Malays are numerically largest in Kelantan, Perlis, Trengganu, Kedah, Pahang, Malacca, Johore and Negri Sembilan (see Table 2.3), constituting an absolute-majority status in the former six states listed. The Chinese form the largest group in Selangor, Perak and Penang, and are numerically close to the Malays in Johore, Negri Sembilan and Malacca. As mentioned earlier, the Ibans are the largest group in Sarawak whereas the Kadazans form a plurality in Sabah.

Residential separation is especially marked on an urban-rural basis. The Malays are heavily concentrated in the northern agricultural states of Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, Trengganu and the

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to permit the Borneo states to retain autonomy in certain agreed sectors. Consequently, Sarawak and Sabah regionalism sharply grew, with the Iban-dominated, Kadazan-dominated, and Chinese communal blocs the primary antagonists toward the center."

<sup>21</sup>For a discussion of the relations between Kuala Lumpur and the two Borneo states before the last elections, see Gordon P. Means, "Eastern Malaysia: The Politics of Federalism", Asian Survey, 8, 4 (April 1968), 289-308. See also Robert O. Tilman, "The Sarawak Political Scene", Pacific Affairs, 37, 4 (Winter 1964-65), 412-425; and Margaret Roff, "The Rise and Demise of Kadazan Nationalism", Journal of Southeast Asian History, 10, 2 (September 1969), 326-343.







central state of Pahang. Most Malays live in rural areas; little more than 10 percent live in urban districts. They comprise only

Table 2.3  
Communal Composition by State by Percentage

<u>Malaya</u> (8,655,299)	Malays <sup>a</sup>	Chinese	Indians	Others
Trengganu (382,282)	92.4	6.1	1.2	0.3
Kelantan (684,554)	91.5	5.6	1.2	1.7
Perlis (118,987)	77.0	18.0	1.8	3.2
Kedah (936,825)	67.8	20.2	9.5	2.5
Pahang (431,747)	57.0	34.4	7.4	1.2
Malacca (416,795)	50.5	39.4	8.1	2.0
Johore (1,316,772)	49.7	40.4	7.5	2.4
Negri Sembilan (517,451)	42.4	40.0	15.1	2.5
Perak (1,656,985)	40.2	43.6	14.6	1.6
Penang (761,194)	28.9	57.0	11.9	2.2
Selangor (1,431,707)	29.8	47.4	19.5	3.3
<u>Sarawak</u> (902,841)	Ibans	Chinese	Malays	Others
	37.3	32.9	18.1	11.7
<u>Sabah</u> (590,660)	Kadazans	Muslims <sup>b</sup>	Chinese	Others
	(31.9) <sup>c</sup>	(30.9) <sup>c</sup>	(23.0) <sup>c</sup>	(14.2) <sup>c</sup>

Source: Figures are estimated population as at 30th June 1967. Annual Bulletin of Statistics: Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur: Department of Statistics, 1968), 1. Sabah's estimated population at 30th June 1967 was given as 590,660 with no details on communal breakdowns.

<sup>a</sup>Includes Aborigines and Indonesians living in Malaya.

<sup>b</sup>Includes the Malays, the Bajaus and "Sabah Other Indigenous" as shown in note e in Table 2.1.

<sup>c</sup>Percentages given here were computed from the communal breakdowns shown in L. W. Jones, North Borneo Report on the Census of Population Taken on 10th August 1960 (Kuching: Government Printing Office, 1962). The total population of Sabah in 1960 was 454,421.



about 20 percent of Malaysia's total urban population and among major cities over 10,000 in population, they have a municipal majority only in Butterworth in Penang, Alor Star in Kedah, Kota Bahru in Kelantan, and Kuala Trengganu in Trengganu. Most Malays lead a kampong-centered agrarian way of life.

About 90 percent of the Chinese population lives on the mainland peninsula, and most of them reside in the west coast states, the region of greatest urbanization and commercialization. They are remarkably urban with nearly 65 percent living in towns and cities of over 10,000 population. One factor which contributed to the urban character of the Chinese population was the Emergency which resulted in the resettlement of 500,000 Chinese in the urban or semi-urban centers called the New Villages.<sup>22</sup> The Chinese in Sarawak are also predominantly coastal and urban. About 60 percent of the Sarawakian Chinese live around the districts of Kuching, Miri, and Sibu.<sup>23</sup> This settlement pattern is duplicated in Sabah, where the coastal urban areas of Jesselton and Sandakan are mostly occupied by Chinese residents.

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<sup>22</sup>See Kernial Singh Sandhu, "Emergency Resettlement in Malaya", Journal of Tropical Geography, 18 (August 1964), 165. See also, below, Chapter IV.

<sup>23</sup>See Judith Palmer, "A Distribution Study of the Chinese in Sarawak", The Sarawak Gazette, 91, 1285 (March 31, 1965); Y. L. Lee, "The Chinese in Sarawak (and Brunei)", Sarawak Museum Journal, 11, 23-24 (July-December 1964), 516-532; and idem, "The Chinese in Sabah", Erdkunde, 19 (November 1965), 306-314.



About 60 percent of the Indians in Malaysia are estate-dwellers associated with rubber tapping, with major concentrations in the west coast states of Selangor, Perak, and Negri Sembilan. The remaining 40 percent reside in towns and cities. On the other hand, the indigenous peoples in East Malaysia can be found mostly in the rural districts, engaging in subsistence cultivation, whereas the Orang Asli in the peninsula still dwell around the jungle fringes, being scarcely touched by modern ways of life.<sup>24</sup>

The discrepancies between the Malayan peninsula and the Borneo states of Sarawak and Sabah and the rural-urban differences among the communities produce serious cultural and political consequences. "The Malaysia of the Malays in the great rice plains of the peninsula is a different country from the bustling consumer metropolis of the capital Chinese or the hills of Iban shifting cultivators." As a result, "political loyalty to the Malaysian nation may at times be limited, or even superseded, by loyalty to a particular region."<sup>25</sup>

The attachment of the Malays and the indigenous tribes to the rural land and the concentration of the non-Malays in mining, plantation, trading and communication centers not only reflect, but

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<sup>24</sup>See alun Jones, op. cit., 286-305; and P. D. R. Williams-Hunt, An Introduction to the Malayan Aborigines (Kuala Lumpur: Government Press, 1952).

<sup>25</sup>John A. MacDougall, op. cit., 36. See also L. W. Jones, The Population of Borneo: A Study of the Peoples of Sarawak, Sabah and Brunei (London: The Athlone Press, 1966).





accentuate, the imbalance in the rate of economic, political, cultural, and educational advancement among the different communities.<sup>26</sup> This uneven rate of progress and modernity has also given rise to different political and cultural outlooks and generated intercommunal jealousy and suspicion. In Deutschian terms,<sup>27</sup> the number of the Chinese and Indians who have been mobilized is greater than that of the Malays and the indigenous peoples. This inequality favors the Chinese and Indian communities in the sense that in the free competition for the rewards of modernization, most Chinese and Indians start out with few handicaps than most Malays and natives.

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<sup>26</sup> "The presence of a large number of Chinese and Indians as compared with the Malays in any region", Rupert Emerson observed in 1937, "is a sure sign of large alien investments and an intensive British administration, while Malay predominance in the local population indicates slight alien investments, a more or less primitive and self-sustaining economic system, and a simple administrative structure ...." *Op. cit.*, 26. See also John Charles Caldwell, "Urban Growth in Malaya: Trends and Implications", *Population Review*, 7, 1 (January 1963), 39-50.

<sup>27</sup> Karl W. Deutsch defines a mobilized population in terms of the following criteria: "the set of persons who live in towns; the set of persons engaged in occupations other than agriculture, forestry, and fishing; the set of persons who read a newspaper at least once a week; the set of persons who pay direct taxes to a central government; or who have attended public or private schools for at least four years; the set of persons attending markets at least once a month; the set of literate adults, of movie-goers, or radio listeners, of registered voters for elections, or of insured persons under social security schemes; or all persons working for money wages in units with five or more employees; and many more." See his Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1953), 100.



Regional and residential separateness, as mentioned earlier, also tends to limit the opportunities for meaningful social contacts and intercourse between members of the communal groups. Even within the cities, the Malays and the Chinese generally remain residentially and organizationally apart: the Malays settling in kampong within the cities, while most of the Chinese crowding into shophouses which double as homes and places of business.<sup>28</sup> When Malay villagers migrate to the city, they tend to live with their kin and friends in a new replica of the rural life.<sup>29</sup> Industrialization in the cities and towns has slightly increased the face-to-face contact between members of the different communal groups. But, unless it is coupled by a vigorous program of resocialization aimed at changing communal outlooks and stereotypes and at hastening the process of structural integration (a process in which communal identification gradually ceases to be relevant as a factor determining

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<sup>28</sup> Kuala Lumpur, the capital city of Malaysia, is a typical example. The Malays in this city live in kampong, the exclusively Malay settlements within the city. Kampong Bahru, Kampong Dato' Keramat, and the industrial suburb of Petaling Jaya are the three of the major Malay settlements in Kuala Lumpur. These city kampong exhibit traits that are exclusively Malay.

<sup>29</sup> For the Malays, "the transition from the kampong to the city does not require any structural realignment of social relations." See Peter J. Wilson, op. cit., 48-49. Communal exclusiveness is also found among the students of the University of Malaya at Kuala Lumpur. See "A Shade of Difference", the Editorial of Mahasiswa Negara (Publication of the University of Malaya Students' Union), 6, 6 (July 24, 1968).





membership in social groups) in all major fields of social intercourse, such contact in factories and workshops is likely to continue to remain mainly functional.

Certain communal stereotypes have also developed from this rural-urban split in communal residence. Orang-orang bandar (city men) consider orang-orang kampong (village men) backward, superstitious, and primitive, while the latter look upon the former as materialistic, infidel, cunning, and lacking in proper respect toward the elders. Orang-orang bandar are orang-orang moden (modern men) whose occupational-urban roles are seen as alien to Malay adat (custom) or what orang-orang kampong regard as the Malay way of life. This unfavorable image of the city men in the mind of the Malay villagers, however, is largely confined to the non-Malays, because the urban Malays live in "villages within the cities", and most of them are seen by their rural counterparts only in their domestic roles (which remain little changed in the cities), not in their occupational-urban roles. Furthermore, to the Malays, the cities are not only urban, but also alien. They are considered "a different world, one that does not belong to the Malay."<sup>30</sup>

Rural-urban cleavages are common phenomena in the transitional societies,<sup>31</sup> but in Malaysia the element of foreignness in the

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<sup>30</sup>Peter J. Wilson, op. cit., 43.

<sup>31</sup>For a description of such cleavages in Southeast Asia, see Lucian



cities has a different political implication. Malaysian cities and towns are marked not only by the presence of colonial culture but also by the cultures of the non-Malay immigrant communities which have now become a component part of the Malaysian society. The importance and prosperity of most of these modern urban centers are the direct results of non-Malay enterprises and British administration. They bear little or no ties to the Malay political past or tradition, as Bangkok does in Siamese history. Thus, the rural-urban cleavages in Malaysia refer not only to the economic and cultural gap between the modern and the traditional sectors of the society. They also involve the question of Malaysian identity. To the non-Malays, the fact that in the eyes of the Malays, the cities are a different world that does not belong to them does not mean that they do not belong to the Malaysians. But the view that the cities in Malaysia are alien is certainly meaningful to the Malays because they regard Malaysia as essentially a Malay country.

During the last two decades or so, social, economic, educational and political changes in Malaysia have resulted in more and more young Malays from the kampong looking to the cities for new opportunities. But when they migrate to the urban areas, what they find is an unfamiliar environment. Due to various factors as well as

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W. Pye, "The Politics of Southeast Asia", in Gabriel A. Almond and James S. Coleman (eds.), The Politics of the Developing Areas (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 81-109.



the rigid family-type structure of the Chinese business system, the new Malay migrants are often disadvantaged compared to the Chinese for social and economic advancement. But, they are, nevertheless, exposed to modernity and become politically active. As the rising expectation aroused by the idea of bumiputraism is not fully fulfilled, they tend to place their blame on alien domination, and frustration and jealousy at the Chinese or Indians grow. Then, "it is a short step from envy to a demand for their expulsion. The young country-man-come-to-town, when competition hits him, becomes a racial nationalist very fast."<sup>32</sup>

#### Occupational and Wealth Distribution

Closely related to the urban-rural division of communal residence is the specialization of the economic roles of the various segments of the Malaysian society. Tables 2.4 and 2.5 sum up the communal distributions in various occupations in Malaya in 1957. These figures are now almost 15 years old and no longer dovetail completely with the real situation in today's Malaysia. But due to the fact that new data are still not available, these old figures can still be used to show the peculiar socio-economic and political configuration in the country in which specialization of occupational roles follows communal

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<sup>32</sup>See Guy Hunter, op. cit., 92.





Table 2.4  
Occupational Distribution by Community by  
Percentage, Malaya, 1957

Occupation	Total	Malay*	Chinese	Indian	Others
Agriculture, Forestry, Hunting, Fishing	572,789	80.3	17.6	0.8	1.3
Agricultural Products Requiring Substantial Processing (Rubber, Palm Oil, etc.)	672,005	43.1	31.1	25.3	0.5
Mining and Quarrying	58,499	17.6	68.3	11.6	2.5
Manufacturing (includ- ing handicraft and automated mfg.)	135,382	19.6	72.0	7.5	0.9
Building and Construc- tion	68,134	32.0	47.8	18.0	2.2
Electricity, Gas and Water	11,569	33.3	25.8	36.1	4.8
Commerce	195,192	16.4	65.1	16.8	1.7
Transport, Storage, Communications	74,755	35.9	39.0	21.6	3.5
Services**	319,745	39.9	34.4	15.0	10.7
Total Economically Active	2,164,861	47.8	35.6	14.4	2.2

Sources: H. Fell, 1957 Population Census of the Federation of Malaya (Kuala Lumpur: Department of Statistics, 1960), 102-110; and Ronald Ma and You Poh Seng, "The Economic Characteristics of the Population of the Federation of Malaya", Malayan Economic Review, 2 (October 1960), 35.

\* Includes the Orang Asli and Indonesians. \*\* For a categorical breakdown of these services and the communal distribution in each category, see Table 2.5.



Table 2.5

Communal Distribution in Some Selected  
Services in Malaya, 1957

Selected Services	Total	Malay*	Chinese	Indian	Others
Government Services	34,189	52.4%	15.4%	26.2%	6.0%
Central, State, Local Government	34,017	52.5	15.5	26.4	5.5
Foreign Consulates and Missions**	171	30.4	13.5	16.4	39.7
Community Services (education, medicine, welfare, trade, and re- ligious organizations)	76,432	41.4	36.2	16.3	6.1
Police and Home Guards and Prisons	52,647	83.2	9.5	4.4	2.9
Armed Forces	11,930	76.7	8.9	8.4	6.0

Source: H. Fell, 1957 Population Census of the Federation of Malaya (Kuala Lumpur: Department of Statistics, 1960), 102-110. The figures in this Table are out of date and misleading concerning the situation in the foreign services. But, as new figures are not available, this Table is given here not as an indication of the actual communal distribution in the various services but as a general reference to the phenomenon of role specialization in Malaysia. During the last 14 years the proportion of the Malays in some of the above services has sharply increased.

\* Includes the Orang Asli and Indonesians.

\*\* The figures here are now misleading. According to the estimate of the late Dato' D. R. Seenivasagam in 1968, "99 per cent" of the staff of Malaysian embassies and high commissions abroad were Malays (see The Straits Times, January 24, 1968, p. 6). Among the 34 ambassadors, high commissioners, consuls and trade commissioners accredited to the various countries abroad in 1970, 25 were Malays, 5 Chinese, 2 Indians, and 2 others. See Malaysia Year Book 1970 (Kuala Lumpur: The Straits Times Press, 1970), 122-125.





lines to a considerable degree. The Malays dominate both ends of the social spectrum, as the rural people engaged in agriculture and other related pursuits at the bottom, and as the political and symbolic elites at the top. The other classes, including most urban groups from employers to workers, are largely Chinese and Indians. The vast majority of the indigenous peoples in East Malaysia join the ranks of the rural Malays in the fields of subsistence agriculture, hunting and fishing.

The phenomenon of occupational specialization in Malaysian society is more than a result of the urban-rural split of its population along communal lines. It is also a reflection of the different values and cultural outlooks to which each community adheres. The Chinese, as the present Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia pointed out in 1965, are "the most gifted people for acquiring wealth and because of centuries of competition in China, they developed the capacity to be competitive."<sup>33</sup> No doubt, such a capacity was also reinforced by the process of migration which was an important mobilizing force inducing changes in man's outlook and attitudes. The decision that took a Chinese or an Indian to Malaya was usually motivated by the determination to seek a better economic life not only for himself but also for his relatives at home. Such determination made him

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<sup>33</sup>Dato' Dr. Ismail bin Dato' Abdul Rahman, Alliance Malaysian Malaysia in Two Stages (Kuala Lumpur: Federal Department of Information, 1965?), 8.



hard-working and increased his flexibility and adaptability to the new environment. China provided a channel for able men of lower economic classes to achieve status of power and prestige through civil service examinations but in Malaya it was in the field of commerce and industries that the Chinese could hope to achieve distinction and social mobility. Being regarded as aliens and denied a share in government and administration in Malaya, many Chinese elites tended to concentrate their attention on improving their economic status as a source of social and political influence. The traditional emphasis of the Chinese on the importance of education has also resulted in the concentration of many of the modern skills in Malaysia in the hands of the Chinese community. What is important is the fact that the drive for economic and educational advancement is the outstanding mark not only of the urban Chinese but of those Chinese living in the rural areas as well.<sup>34</sup>

On the other hand, the Malays, regardless of their place

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<sup>34</sup>"The Chinese, in contrast to other people in Southeast Asia, are always 'getting ahead' - from coolies to small entrepreneur, from small entrepreneur to capitalist." See Cora Du Bois, Social Forces in Southeast Asia (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1962). In 1891, the Governor of British North Borneo said: "Experience in the Straits Settlements, the Malay Peninsula and Sarawak has shown that the people to cause rapid progress in Malayan countries are the hardworking, money-loving Chinese, and these are the people whom the Company should lay themselves out to attract to Borneo." As quoted in Victor Purcell, The Chinese in Southeast Asia (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 73. For observations of the same nature, see Sir George Leith's statement quoted in Rupert Emerson, op. cit., 74; and Sir Frank Swettenham, British Malaya, revised edition (London: Allen and Unwin, 1948), 301.



of residence in the country, are generally characterized by a lack of commercial inclination and a profound love of the kampong life. They will accept "changes that can be grafted on to their existing techniques", but will not accept "those changes that would radically upset their whole way of life."<sup>35</sup> Their attachment to values based on Malay-Muslim tradition and the subsistence economy produces a cultural outlook which is oriented toward rural-traditional rather than urban-occupational roles. The higher inclination of the rural Malays for kerja than for makan gaji has also set limit to their propensity for commercial pursuits in towns and cities. The term kerja (work) refers to those human tasks (such as gardening,

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<sup>35</sup>Brien K. Parkinson, "Non-Economic Factors in the Economic Retardation of the Rural Malays", Modern Asian Studies, 1, 1 (January 1967), 35. Another writer observes, "in spite of the changes that have been taking place, the Malay villagers are still pretty much attached to their old way of life. ... they hold to values based on their subsistence economy, according to which wealth should be distributed among relatives and friends and its personal accumulation is regarded as antisocial." See R. E. Downs, "A Rural Community in Kelantan, Malaya", in Robert K. Sakai (ed.), Studies on Asia, 1960 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1960), 60. M. G. Swift has also shown that the Malays still prefer to hold their wealth in the form of cattle, land and jewellery. See his "The Accumulation of Capital in a Peasant Economy", Economic Development and Cultural Change, 5 (1956-57), 325-337; "Capital, Saving and Credit in a Malay Peasant Economy", in Raymond Firth and B. S. Yamey (eds.), Capital, Saving and Credit in Peasant Societies (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1963), 133-152; and "Economic Concentration and Malay Peasant Society" in Maurice Freedman (ed.), Social Organization: Essays Presented to Raymond Firth (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1967), 241-269.





fishing, collecting firewood, working in the padi field and food preparation) which contribute directly and in kind to the household's subsistence. Such tasks are thought of as being worthy of human labor and conducive to one's dignity. They "are inherently part of Malay adat, which, together with Islam, is the touchstone of worthiness."<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, those human activities which contribute only indirectly to man's subsistence are referred to as makan gaji (paid work or work for wages). Although rubber tapping is the major economic activity of many rural Malays, it is held in low esteem because it is inseparable from money and devoid of any dignity. As a result, Wilson observes,

For many households [in Jendram Hilir], only a minimum amount of time is spent tapping, which leaves plenty of time for doing other things. Many of the young unmarried men of the village either do not tap at all or tap very irregularly and specifically in order to earn cigarette money. Most of their morning is spent leafing through old newspapers, talking, listening to the radio, and drinking coffee. The afternoon is often spent sleeping or playing 'twenty-one', and the evening goes like the morning. All of these young men spoke of their desire for money and of lack of opportunity to earn any other than by going to work in Kuala Lumpur.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Peter J. Wilson, op. cit., 94.

<sup>37</sup>Peter J. Wilson, op. cit., 103-104.



Among those young Malays who come to towns and cities, most of them are more interested in positions in the public services or the armed forces than in assignments which can be classified as makan gaji. To become part of the kerajaan (government or administration) still remains the highest aspiration of an educated Malay.<sup>38</sup> In the last two decades, entry into the armed forces has also been considered by the young Malays as one of the brightest channel to power and wealth.<sup>39</sup>

The occupational distribution of the Indian community is largely determined by its sub-group orientations. Generally speaking, the Indian Tamils are likely to work as rubber tappers in the estates; Ceylonese Tamils as professional men; Gujeratis and Marak-kayars as businessmen, dealers and shopkeepers; Chettiars as money-lenders; Sikhs and Pathans as policemen, watchmen, taxi-drivers, etc..<sup>40</sup> It can, therefore, be seen that the economic roles each communal group in Malaysia performs tend to be sustained and reinforced not only by its place of residence but also by its cultural values and ways of life.

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<sup>38</sup>See B. A. R. Mokhzani, "The Study of Social Stratification and Social Mobility in Malaya", East Asian Cultural Studies, 4 (March 1965), 138-162.

<sup>39</sup>See Peter J. Wilson, op. cit., 104; and M. G. Swift, Malay Peasant Society in Jelebu (New York: Humanities Press, Inc., 1965), 149ff.

<sup>40</sup>See Usha Mahajani, The Role of Indian Minorities in Burma and Malaya (Bombay: Vora & Co., Publishers Private Ltd., 1960), 95-102.





In Malaysia, as in other developing countries, most of the national wealth is concentrated in the urban areas. This situation has led to the amassment of most of the economic power and modern skills and know-how in the hands of the Chinese, Indians and other non-Malay immigrant groups. Thus, wealth distribution in Malaysia coincides not only with the urban-rural polarization of communal residence but also with the bumiputra-non-bumiputra division of the population. This does not mean, however, that the bumiputra-non-bumiputra cleavage corresponds exactly to the gap between the poor and the rich. As poverty knows no racial barriers, it is a word that applies to many Chinese and Indians as well as to Malays.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>See Tjoa Soei Hock, Institutional Background to Modern Economic and Social Development in Malaya (Kuala Lumpur: Liu and Liu, 1963), 34-36. As pointed out by Lea E. Williams, "Despite the popular indigenous belief that most settlers are merchants, the overseas Chinese display no economic-class cohesiveness. The largest of their occupational groups is composed of men of trade, but that body is far from united as an interest group. Its membership includes at one extreme men who sell one cigarette at a time to customers too poor to afford more and at the other end men who deal in tons of rubber and tin on the world market" (*op. cit.*, 21). "We can ... say with confidence", James J. Puthuchearry wrote in 1960, "that the commonly held view that Chinese dominate the economy is false. ... The capital that dominates Malaya's economy is European." See his Ownership and Control in the Malayan Economy (Singapore: Eastern University Press, 1960), xix, and see also 123-124. Puthuchearry found that "European-owned firms controlled 65-75% of the export trade in 1953 and 60-70% of the import trade in 1955. European-owned firms held about 75% of the import agencies against some 10% held by Chinese firms." *Ibid.*, xiv-xv. See also A. Doak Barnett, "Problems of Communalism and Communism: Overseas Chinese in Malaya", American Universities Field Staff: Southeast Asia Series, 3, 282 (November 1955), 1-21. Such a situation has not changed much in recent years. Due to the fact that the Chinese, next to the Europeans, have the



In fact, it has been suggested by some studies that the problem of the economic and political imbalance between the Malays and the Chinese should be considered as essentially a conflict of rural versus urban interests.

Poverty prevails in the rural areas whilst relative abundance is manifest in the urban areas. Political power rests with the majority in the rural areas as urban population accounts for a bare 26.5 per cent of total population. There is therefore dominant rural-based pressure for measures not only to stimulate economic growth but also for a greater redistribution of existing wealth from urban to rural areas. Since urban areas are Chinese and rural areas are Malay, it is easy to confuse the true rural/urban conflict with a racial conflict.<sup>42</sup>

It is true that confusing the problem of wealth imbalance in Malaysia with a racial conflict would "hinder rather than facilitate the application of suitable economic and effective remedies";<sup>43</sup> but one should

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largest share of economic control among the various communities and the conspicuousness of their economic roles in Malaysian economy, the belief that the Chinese dominate the economy still prevails in the minds of the Malay masses.

<sup>42</sup> Augustine H. H. Tan, "Special Development Problems of a Plural Society: The Malayan Example - A Comment", The Economic Record, 40, 89 (March 1964), 120. Tan's criticisms are directed to E. K. Fisk's article, "Special Development Problems of a Plural Society: The Malayan Example", ibid., 38, 82 (June 1962), 209-225. For Fisk's Rejoinder, see ibid., 40, 89 (March 1964), 121-123.

<sup>43</sup> Augustine H. H. Tan, loc. cit..





also admit that the popular Malay belief that the Chinese dominate the economy of Malaysia is based on their daily experience with Chinese merchants and retailers and is unlikely to be changed by telling the Malays that it is the Europeans, rather than the Chinese, who have the largest share of economic control in the country or that the economic imbalance is related to the urban-rural cleavages rather than to race.

Several factors seem to reinforce the Malay belief that Malaysian economy is dominated by the Chinese community. First, in terms of income and standard of living, the immigrant non-Malay communities, especially the Chinese, compare favorably with the Malay and the indigenous communities. As Table 2.6 demonstrates, the average income per head of the Chinese in Malaya in the year 1957 was more than double the average income per head of the Malays. The

Table 2.6

Income by Communal groups  
Malaya, 1957

	Malay	Chinese	Indian
Annual per capita income	M\$359	M\$848	M\$691
Aggregate income (\$million)	M\$1,125	M\$1,975	M\$475
Percentage of total income	30	54	13

Source: T. H. Silcock, "Communal and Party Structure" in T. H. Silcock and E. K. Fisk (eds.), The Political Economy of Independent Malaya: A Case-Study in Development (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 1963), 2-3.

Note: US\$1 approximately equals M\$3.





Indians were also better-off than the Malays on a per capita basis. Furthermore, the Chinese share of the nation's aggregate income of that year was far greater than that of the Malays despite the fact that the latter had a greater numerical strength in the country. It is true that the economic position of an increasing number of the Malay individuals has improved since 1957; but the overall situation has remained relatively unchanged. With the formation of Malaysia, the large majority of the indigenous peoples in Sarawak and Sabah has now become the lowest income group in the Federation.

Like any other Southeast Asian country, Malaysia has an extremely pyramid-shaped class structure with the upper class being very small, the middle class a bit larger, and the lower class the overwhelming majority. According to MacDougall's computation which was based on the 1957 population census of Malaya and the 1960 population census of Sarawak and Sabah, in Malaysia as a whole, about one of every hundred Malaysians belongs to the upper class, 8 belong to the middle, and 91 to the lower.<sup>44</sup> Class distribution by communal groups in the three Malaysian territories are shown in Table 2.7. The Chinese, despite their relative minority status in each territory, numerically predominate in both relative and absolute terms not only

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<sup>44</sup>The percentages are as follows: upper class, 1.3%; middle class, 8.2%; and lower class, 90.5%. See John A. MacDougall, *op. cit.*, p. 23, Table 2.1.



in the upper class but also in the middle class in all three territories. In peninsular Malaysia, the Indian community has more persons in the upper class than the Malay. As a result, the Chinese community as a whole has a greater access to the symbols of wealth and class, such as cars, modern houses, air-conditioned offices, servants, chauffeurs, villas, etc...

Finally, the fact that the Chinese, and to a certain extent, the Indians, have controlled almost the entire distributive and transportation networks<sup>45</sup> of the economy throughout the country tends to make their economic roles more conspicuous than those of the Europeans and to create an impression in the minds of the Malay masses that the Chinese and the Indians have formed the exploitative class in their society. European-owned firms may still have a predominant share of control over the export and import trade of Malaysia, but most of the personnel who run these firms are Chinese, Indian or Eurasian. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the Chinese have a greater access to the wealth and class symbols of the society. As these symbols are mostly visible and targets of envy, they tend to reinforce Malay belief that the Chinese are exploiters.

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<sup>45</sup>Malay participation in the bus transport industry and the taxi enterprise has increased noticeably in recent years. In 1967, MARA's investment in the bus transport industry amounted to 15.1% of the total capital for all bus transport in Malaysia. MARA ultimately hopes to transfer these investments to Malays. See J. H. Beaglehole, "Malay Participation in Commerce and Industry: The Role of RIDA and MARA", Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies, 7, 3 (November 1969), 236.





Table 2.7  
Class Distribution by Communal  
Groups in Malaysia

Class*	Malaya			Sarawak			Sabah		
	Upper	Middle	Lower	Upper	Middle	Lower	Upper	Middle	Lower
Total	30,740	187,221	1,900,056	1,115	15,348	277,809	1,408	8,742	166,471
Malay (%)	15.5	31.1	49.3	14.6	16.0	14.5	-**	-**	-**
Chinese (%)	57.9	47.8	34.1	54.3	64.3	20.4	52.3	63.1	15.8
Indian (%)	16.2	14.9	14.4	-***	-***	-***	-***	-***	-***
Indigenous (%)	-	-	-	18.7	14.0	64.3	25.3	19.0	72.3
Others (%)***	10.4	6.2	2.2	12.4	5.7	0.8	22.4	17.9	11.9

Sources: Computed from Table 2.2 and Table 2.3 in John A. MacDougall, Shared Burdens: A Study of Communal Discrimination by the Political Parties of Malaysia and Singapore (Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1968), 25-27, 31-32. MacDougall's figures were computed from the 1957 population census of Malaya and the 1960 population census of Sarawak and Sabah.

\* Class categories are allotted largely according to a division between manual and non-manual labor. The defining difference used by MacDougall to separate upper from lower class occupations was "control over the destinies of large number of people". The economically active population was statistically limited for Malaya to those aged 10 and over, and for Sarawak and Sabah, 15 and over.

\*\*Included in "Indigenous".

\*\*\*Included in "Others".

\*\*\*\*Others includes Europeans, Eurasians, Filipinos, Indians in Sarawak and Sabah, and Europeans, Eurasians, Filipinos, Siamese, Orang Asli and other minor groups in Malaya.



While the Chinese and Indians provided the entrepreneurs as well as the labor for most non-agricultural occupations, the Malays have monopolized the country's top leadership roles. They have a predominant control over the federal cabinet, the various ministries and public services, the judiciary, and the military and police forces. They occupy all of the symbolic leadership roles at both the federal (the Yang di-Pertuan Agong) and state (the 9 traditional sultanates, 3 governorships, and 1 Yang di-Pertuan Negara) levels and control both houses of the federal parliament, and until the 1969 elections, every state legislative assembly and government. In short, the Malaysian political system is so embedded in Malay-Muslim political culture that the multicultural realities of the Malaysian society have been almost completely ignored.

Because economic strength and political power are distributed unevenly among the communities, an atmosphere of distrust and jealousy and a feeling of frustration and insecurity have been generated and accentuated.<sup>46</sup> Malay political preponderance is based on the long-standing claim of bumiputeraism by the Malay community and is sanctioned by the constitution of the country in the form of accepting the Malay community as the core cultural unit and according the Malays special

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<sup>46</sup> See Goh Keng Swee, "Entrepreneurship in a Plural Economy", Malayan Economic Review, 3, 1 (April 1958), 3-4.





rights and preferential treatment in the fields of civil service, education, business licences, military service, and so on.<sup>47</sup> There is little or nothing in the symbolic aspects of the Malaysian political system (such as the Rulers, the national flag and anthem, the Malaysian armorial ensigns, the national language, and Islam as the State Religion) that suggests that Chinese, Indian, Kadazan, or English culture is an integral part of the Malaysian identity. Malay political predominance is also strengthened by the delimitation of the electoral constituencies, which has given a measure of "weightage" for the rural areas where the Malay elites draw their support,<sup>48</sup> while Chinese and Indian political influence is further curtailed by citizenship regulations, the "liberal" interpretation of the Internal Security Act, and the abolition of all local government elections in

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<sup>47</sup>See S. M. Huang-Thio, "Constitutional Discrimination under the Malaysian Constitution", Malaya Law Review, 6, 1 (July 1964), 1-16; L. C. Green, "Malaya/Singapore/Malaysia: Comments on State Competence, Succession and Continuity", Canadian Yearbook of International Law 4 (1966), 3-42; H. E. Groves, "Constitutional Problems" in Wang Gungwu (ed.), Malaysia: A Survey (New York: Praeger, 1964), 356-364; and idem, "Equal Protection of the Laws in Malaysia and India", American Journal of Comparative Law, 12 (1963), 385-396.

<sup>48</sup>Commenting on this point, the paper of one opposition party wrote: "The Alliance professes to operate a democratic system. But in Malaysia, although one man has one vote, one man's vote is not equal to another's vote. In fact, in some cases, one vote is equivalent to six other votes." The Rocket, 2, 8 (August 1967), 3. See also Alvin Rabushka, Ethnic Components of Political Integration in Two Malayan Cities (Ph.D. Dissertation, Washington University, 1968), 143-149. For another explanation, see T. E. Smith, "The Administration of the Election", in K. J. Ratnam and R. S. Milne, The Malayan Parliamentary Election of 1964 (Singapore: University of Malaya Press, 1967), 59-81. See also John A. MacDougall, op. cit., 195-216.





1965.<sup>49</sup> After the 1969 racial riots, the Malay-dominated government banned public discussion or questioning of issues relating to Malay special privileges and political preponderance. Measures have now been taken to amend the constitution so that such prohibition can become a part of the fundamental law of the country.<sup>50</sup>

Although few non-Malays have openly aired their disagreement with the granting of special privileges to the Malays, most would support the view that since there are many poor non-Malays as well as many poor Malays, any constitutional protection which is given should be based on the ground of economic weakness and needs rather than that of racial origin. Of chief concern to the non-Malays (especially the Chinese) in the last two and a half decades has been the acquiring of political power commensurate with their citizen status in Malaysia. On the one hand, they fear that since the Malays have a dominant control over the political and military powers of the country, they may eventually be forced to surrender their economic gains through the arbitrary use of this political and military ascendancy on the part of the Malays. On the other, they feel that they have been rejected

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<sup>49</sup>As many Chinese and Indians live in towns and cities, local and municipal elections provided a channel for the non-Malay communities to get access to political power at the local level. Alvin Rabushka found that the suspension of local elections was designed to eliminate non-Malay opposition power in many of the urban centers in Malaya. Op. cit., 161-175.

<sup>50</sup>See The Straits Times, January 23, 1971, for the Constitution Amendment White Paper published on January 22, 1971.



because what belongs to them (such as language and culture) has not been accepted by the Malays as a legitimate part of the emerging Malaysian identity. Such fears and frustration have given rise to their quest for political equality and full acceptance and their increasingly vigorous demand for building a Malaysian Malaysia.

From the Malay point of view, however, political power, civil services, and the armed forces are the only major channels through which they can have access to influence, status and wealth and counter-balance non-Malay economic power, while the insistence on the adoption of the Malay-Muslim culture as the model of nation-building in Malaysia is seen as the best guarantee against the submergence of the Malay community by "alien" cultures. "If these rights [Malay special rights] are taken away", the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tunku Abdul Rahman, asked in 1965, "what hope is there for the Malays to survive in their own country?"<sup>51</sup> Dr. Mahathir Mohamed expressed the same sentiment before his expulsion from the UMNO in 1969: "the immediate effect of any adverse change in the political status of the Malays will be to leave them at the mercy of ... the Chinese."<sup>52</sup> Thus,

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<sup>51</sup>The Tunku's speech at a solidarity rally at Tapah; see The Straits Times, April 25, 1965, 1. The Tunku said: "all the businesses, the wealth and trade in this country are in the hands of the non-Malays. Hardly one percent of the Malays are in business and hardly 15 percent of those in universities abroad or at home are Malays.... If the Malays are not given protection in this matter the consequence is that they will follow the ranks of extremists and sooner or later Malays will be forced to join Indonesia." See Utusan Melayu, April 26, 1965.

<sup>52</sup>Mahathir Mohamed (former MP and Executive-Secretary of the UMNO), "Pauper in Power", Opinion, 1, 6 (30 January - 20 February, 1968), 71.





the uneven distribution of economic and political powers between the Malay and the non-Malay communities has also generated an anti-non-Malay sentiment among the Malays. Such sentiment has been expressed in the vigorous assertion by the Malay community of the principle of Malay supremacy and special privileges and in its efforts to build a Malay Malaysia based on Malay-Muslim cultural characteristics.

It should be noted that not until the mid-1960's had the predominance of the non-Malays in commerce and industry become the central and open target of political controversy and resentment. On the one hand, as most of the Malay voters live in the rural areas, the Malay-dominated government responded to Malay demands by giving priority to agricultural and rural development. At the same time, in implementing the policy of giving preferences to the Malays, the capacity of the Malay masses did not develop speedily enough to take proper advantage of the opportunities offered to them. This was one of the reasons which led to the extensive abuse of economic privileges by the Malays through the practice of name-lending or Ali-Baba business.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Ali-Baba (Ali, the Malay, and Baba, the Chinese) business refers to the practice whereby a Malay who has taken up his business licence transfers the right to use his licence to non-Malays in return for money. This practice is widespread in timber, transport, and contracting. The Chief Minister of Sabah claimed that 75% of Malay timber enterprises in that state were Ali-Baba businesses. Utusan Melayu, May 3, 1968. In 1968, the Minister of Transport revealed that most of Malay taxis were being operated on the basis of name-lending. See Berita Harian, October 6, and 28, 1968. Such a practice, as pointed out by S. M. Huang-Thio, creates a class of Malay "pensioners". Moreover, given the level of literacy and the lack



As a result, the early efforts to improve the economic position of the Malays produced only a limited impact on non-Malay business interests. On the other hand, unlike many young Chinese who look to the fields of commerce, industry and science for opportunities to achieve distinction and social mobility, the young educated Malays are attracted to the civil and military services as the major channels and short-cuts to power, influence and wealth. During the last two decades, these two services had absorbed a large number of the educated Malay elites. Apparently, the two developments just described had temporarily allowed for the avoidance of direct communal competition for the same interests. But in the long run, they tend to aggravate intercommunal suspicion and hinder the process of political integration in the country.

In the first place, the identification of the political sector with the Malays and the commercial and industrial sector with the non-Malays are encouraged rather than broken by the two developments discussed in the preceding paragraph. Due to the inadequacy

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of capital among the rural Malays, special privileges do not really benefit the bulk of the Malay peasants. Huang-Thio asks: "Of what use are scholarships and places in the public services if one is illiterate? ... of what use are permits and licences to operate undertakings if one does not possess any capital to operate them?" Op. cit., 14-15. Apparently, the Malays already wealthy stand to benefit from these protections. See Lee Kuan Yew, The Battle for A Malaysian Malaysia (1), (Singapore: Ministry of Culture, 1965), 39. Moreover, such protections can also be used to block the non-Malays as well. See also Ungku Abdul Aziz, "Facts and Fallacies on Malay Economy", Straits Times, February 28, March 1 and 4, 1957, at p. 6 respectively.





of the protective measures designed to elevate the standard of living of the Malay peasants and their extensive abuse, the rural development program and the policy to encourage Malay participation in commerce have not achieved their desired goals. As widespread expectation for something better has been created, the failure of the government to bring about visible and rapid improvements of rural life gives rise to a situation of tension in which the frustrated Malay peasants and youths, encouraged by racial extremists, tend to look at the non-Malays with jealousy and envy and to blame the government for making too many concessions to the non-Malays, whereas the non-Malays bear resentment against Malay political domination, cultural hegemony and the excessive use (or abuse) of the special privileges by the Malays.<sup>54</sup> Knowing little about the basic reasons of Malay economic retardation, the non-Malay masses tend to adhere to their long-standing stereotype that the Malays are lazy, shiftless and "hopeless".<sup>55</sup> In the second place, intercommunal competition

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<sup>54</sup>Non-Malays' resentment arises not only from the fact that the poor non-Malays are barred from the benefit of protection but also from the fact that the Malays tend to look upon their special privileges not so much as a measure of protection than as an expression of their superior position or natural right as sons of the soil. Such a sentiment can be detected in the following report: "A university tutor, urging an exceptionally able Malay student in Kuala Lumpur University to aim at a first class in his final degree, was told: 'Even if I get a third and the Chinese gets a first, I shall be director and he will be my deputy.'" See Guy Hunter, op. cit., 45.

<sup>55</sup>One of the widespread beliefs among members of the Chinese community





for the same interests may be avoided by emphasizing rural and agricultural development. But this goal can be achieved only on the assumption that the Malay population remains chiefly rural while the number of urban Malays remains small enough to be absorbed into the developing bureaucracies and the armed forces. However, "when the economic situation is no longer so felicitously definable in rural-urban terms and when the government posts are full",<sup>56</sup> rural and agricultural development alone is no longer sufficient to prevent the various communities from coming to desire precisely the same things. In the third place, the fact that the military and the administrative as well as the political branches of the political system are manned mostly by the Malays tend to deepen the non-Malay fear of Malay domination and accentuate their sense of insecurity. Communal conflicts in the neighboring regions seem to have convinced the non-Malays that in an environment like Malaysia, it is political power coupled with military strength, rather than economic power, that is the most difficult to break. Finally, as policy priorities in help-

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is that most of the rural Malays are incapable of improving their economic positions no matter how much financial aid the government is prepared to give them. It is believed that many rural Malays tend to use government funds and loans to buy bicycles, motor-cycles, radios, sewing machines, and other personal luxuries, rather than to improve their land, tools and seeds. Thus, the Chinese seem to hold that no one can help a person who is not prepared to help himself.

<sup>56</sup> Cynthia Holden Enloe, Multi-Ethnic Politics: The Case of Malaysia (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1967), 48-49.



ing the Malays are formulated and defended on the ground of racial origin and prior residence, the existing divisions between the so-called bumiputra and non-bumiputra, instead of being gradually cemented, are widened. After the formation of the MARA structures in 1965, more forceful measures and plans have been taken to encourage Malay participation in commerce and industry.<sup>57</sup> Apparently, the capacity of the bureaucracies and the armed forces to accommodate the increasing number of the educated Malay elites has become more and more limited. On the other hand, stimulated by the idea of a Malaysian Malaysia, non-Malay pressure for political equality and full acceptance has noticeably increased in recent years. All this shows is that the Malay and the non-Malay communities can now no longer be prevented from coming to desire, and compete for, the same interests.

Occupational specialization and wealth imbalance along communal lines as well as the rural-urban division of communal residence have also produced other consequences of political importance. On the one hand, Malay communal solidarity based on a shared Muslim belief, a common Malay language, and a common racial identity, is greatly strengthened by a distinctive, tradition-encrusted, rural, parochial, poor and agrarian way of life. This results in a communal outlook which is conservative, exclusive, uncompromising, rigid and

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<sup>57</sup>See J. H. Beaglehole, op. cit., 288-239. See also Robert Ho, "Land Ownership and Economic Prospects of Malayan Peasants", Modern Asian Studies, 4, 1 (January 1970), 83-92.





insusceptible to change.<sup>58</sup> The behavior and goals of all Malay political parties are thus shaped and conditioned by this communal outlook to a considerable extent, as the rural Malays constitute the main support bases of these parties. On the other hand, the urbanness and occupational roles of the Chinese and Indians have given rise to a diversity of political outlooks which are different from that of the Malay peasants. Among them, the orientation toward radical ideas and the predisposition to radical activities on the part of certain groups of non-Malay youth and labor are greatly feared by the Malay community at large. Even those moderate forces which have recently grown among the English-educated non-Malays seeking to achieve modernization and a Malaysian nation based on a non-communal program have generated resentment and hostility among the Malays who have not been resocialized to accept the non-Malays as their equals and tend to see "Malaysian Malaysia" as a challenge to the "legitimate" dominance of the Malays as the sons of the soil. As regards the outlook of the Chinese community as a whole, it is more flexible and pragmatic than that of the Malay. In fact, the Chinese, and the Indians as well, have little choice but to become

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<sup>58</sup> See Brien K. Parkinson, op. cit., 32-43. For a different view, see William Wilder, "Islam, Other Factors and Malay Backwardness: Comments on an Argument", Modern Asian Studies, 2, 2 (April 1968), 155-164. For Brien K. Parkinson's reply, see "The Economic Retardation of the Malays - A Rejoinder", ibid., 2, 3 (July 1968), 267-272.



more flexible and pragmatic so that full acceptance may be given to them by the politically dominant Malay community.

Specialization of economic roles along communal lines has limited the growth of secondary organizations with multicommunal memberships. As a matter of fact, there are indeed few "functionally specific" interest groups in Malaysia except the organizations of trade unions. But even trade unions are not completely multicommunal either. In many cases, union membership is restricted by the phenomenon of occupational specialization to persons of the same communal origin. Furthermore, residential separateness and language differences have led to a situation in which there are separate Malay, Chinese and Indian unions for the same occupational category.<sup>59</sup> One outstanding example of these are the various teachers' unions which are organized according to the medium of instruction in schools. These unions are often more concerned with the preservation of their respective communal culture and values than with their common professional and functional interests. Apart from trade unions, other interest articulation structures are almost exclusively communal. For the Malay community, which is primarily rural, interests are expressed through the

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<sup>59</sup>See R. S. Milne, Government and Politics in Malaysia, op. cit., 110-112; Norton Ginsburg and Chester F. Roberts, Jr., op. cit., 371-373; and K. J. Ratnam, "Political Parties and Pressure Groups", in Wang Gungwu (ed.), op. cit., 336-345.



traditional social channels and structures which are exclusively Malay. Until recently, with the growth of political infrastructures, the major means of interest articulation of the Chinese community have been the clan associations, the guilds and the chambers of commerce. According to Alvin Rabushka, the number of people belonging to racially mixed societies has declined since 1963. Although there was a decrease in the number of Chinese belonging to Chinese societies in recent years, the number of Malays in purely Malay societies increased steadily since 1959.<sup>60</sup>

While political parties in Malaysia will be discussed in Part III in this study, it should be pointed out here that "unlike political parties, non-party associations are legitimately able to pursue expressly communal ends."<sup>61</sup> The decline in the number of people belonging to racially mixed societies and the sharp increase in the number of purely Malay societies seem to indicate that the people in Malaysia, the Malays in particular, have, in recent years, become more communally mobilized. As the UMNO is able to embrace

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<sup>60</sup> Alvin Rabushka, op. cit., 195-205. It is found that the number of purely Malay societies increased from 1,300 in 1959 to 3,400 in 1965, while during the same period, purely Chinese societies increased from 2,900 to roughly 3,400 (ibid., 199).

<sup>61</sup> Cynthia Holden Enloe, op. cit., 291.





almost all the non-political organizations of the Malay community, unlike the MCA and the MIC which "are pressured from without, UMNO is more apt to be pressured from within."<sup>62</sup> Since the Malay masses have become more mobilized in purely Malay associations for communal concerns, the outlook and policy directions of the UMNO (and other Malay political parties as well) are bound to be communally radicalized by this development.

It is pointed out in one study that a "model characteristic" of the developing areas is the wide gap between the traditional mass and the modern elite, which controls the "central structure of government", and speaks and acts for the whole society.<sup>63</sup> In a sense, this is true in the Malaysian situation, but it is not the whole truth. First, the bulk of the traditional masses in Malaysia is composed disproportionately of the members of the Malay and the indigenous communities. There is little in common between the so-called bumiputra and non-bumiputra segments of the traditional masses. As seen earlier, they are separated by residential areas and regions, and differentiated according to their occupations, language, religion, tra-

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<sup>62</sup>Cynthia Holden Enloe, op. cit., 293.

<sup>63</sup>James S. Coleman, "Conclusion: The Political Systems of the Developing Areas", in Gabriel A. Almond and James S. Coleman (eds.), op. cit., 535-536. See also Claude Ake, A Theory of Political Integration (Homewood, Illinois: The Dorsey Press, 1967), 68-81.



ditions, way of life, motivations, political values and the different degree of mobilization. Secondly, in Malaysia, only one segment of the modern subsociety (i.e., the Malay) has a preponderance of control over "the central structure of government." Although some similarities can be found among members of the elite subsociety as a whole, these elites are motivated by different political goals and communal interests and behave differently according to their educational background. During the colonial era and a brief period in post-independence Malaya, the English-educated non-Malay elites had been given tentative recognition and a share in social and political responsibilities. This seems to account for the outward appearance of elite cooperation among the communities under the Alliance formula in the past. However, with the vigorous assertion of Malay communal supremacy in language and other administrative and cultural spheres and the growth of the sentiment of bumiputeraism in the Malay community in recent years, the Western-educated Malay elites, in order to retain whatever power they have possessed, tend to align themselves with their Malay-educated counterparts to defend and expand the special position and political supremacy of their community, from which their own economic, social and political prerogatives are derived. The immediate effect of this development is the gradual exclusion of the Western-educated non-Malay elites from the status and power struc-

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ture of the society, thus giving rise to a new situation in which the Western-educated non-Malay elites tend to align themselves with their vernacular-educated counterparts (who have long been excluded from the elite ruling group) in their common quest for political equality and full acceptance in Malaysia. Despite their differences, what both the Western-educated and the vernacular-educated non-Malay elites have in common is "the belief that they have been unjustly excluded from their rightful status in society."<sup>64</sup> Thus, there exists not only a wide gap between the masses and the elites in Malaysia, but also a wide gap between the masses, and between the elites of different communities.

#### Race, Religion and Bumiputraism

One of the major divisions among the many coinciding cleavages separating the communal groups in Malaysia is "race". The term "race is often used by Malaysians and students of Malaysian politics to identify the major communities in Malaysia. However, "in Malaysian politics the racial factor does relatively little to explain behavior."<sup>65</sup> The reasons most frequently given for this conclusion are

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<sup>64</sup>See Wang Gungwu, "Traditional Leadership in a New Nation: The Chinese in Malaya and Singapore", in S. Takdir Alisjahbana, Xavier S. Thani Nayagam and Wang Gungwu (eds.), The Cultural Problems of Malaysia in the Context of Southeast Asia (Kuala Lumpur: The Malaysian Society of Orientalists, 1965), 174-175. See also idem, "Chinese Politics in Malaya", China Quarterly, 43 (July-September 1970), 1-30.

<sup>65</sup>Cynthia Holden Enloe, op. cit., 59.



twofold. The first reason shows that intermarriage in Malaysia is not inhibited by race but by religion.<sup>66</sup> On the one hand, Muslim-Malay law forbids marriage between Muslims and non-Muslims unless the latter convert to the Muslim faith, change their names into ones with a Muslim form, undergo bersunat (circumcision) and follow Muslim-Malay ways of life.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, a Muslim male can legally possess four wives at once if he can afford them all. Obviously, these two factors constitute a great barrier to intermarriage between members of the Muslim and non-Muslim communities in Malaysia. The second reason that race itself is not an obstacle to communal intermingling is the common practice of the Malays to adopt Chinese baby girls. These children are brought up in the Muslim faith and regarded as any other Malays.<sup>68</sup> In short, "providing the confession of

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<sup>66</sup> See, for example, Juliet Edmonds, "Religion, Intermarriage and Assimilation: The Chinese in Malaya", Race, 10, 1 (July 1968), 57-67; The Siauw Giap, "Religion and Overseas Chinese Assimilation in South-east Asian Countries", Revue du Sud-Est Asiatique, 2 (1965), 67-83; and G. William Skinner, "Change and Persistence in Chinese Culture Overseas: A Comparison of Thailand and Java", Journal of the South Seas Society, 16, 1-2 (1960), 86-100.

<sup>67</sup> To be valid, intermarriage between Muslims and non-Muslims must be solemnized by Muslim kathis and witnessed by the immediate relatives of the couples concerned as required by Islamic law. On May 18, 1970, the State Chief Kathi of Penang, Haji Ahmad bin Hussain, expressed his concern with the increasing tendency of Muslims to wed non-Muslims at the Registry of Marriages. "From the Islamic point of view", he said, "such marriages are not valid". See The Straits Times, May 19, 1970, 11.

<sup>68</sup> See Judith Djamour, "Adoption of Children among Singapore Malaysians", Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and





faith is made Islam takes no note of colour, culture, racial or political origin."<sup>69</sup>

While intermarriage between the Muslims and non-Muslims in Malaysia is extremely rare, intermarriage between members of the non-Muslim communities, where religion is not a formidable barrier, is not a frequent occurrence either. As a recent survey (Table 2.8) demonstrates, the rate of intermarriage between the non-Muslims in Kuala Lumpur and George Town is usually 1 percent or less. Moreover, the fact that the figures in Table 2.8 were computed from data confined to the two major Malaysian urban centers seems to indicate that the occurrence of intermarriage in the rural areas would be much rarer. Although the same survey shows that the students in the campus of the University of Malaya reported a relatively higher willingness to marry outside their communal group (Table 2.9), this disposition was not reflected in their actual behavior. In other words, attitude toward inter-communal marriage seems to change with the level of education, and yet change in attitude has not led to behavioral change.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, as Table 2.9 indicates, the percentage

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Ireland, 82, 2 (1952), 159-168. In fact, Tunku Abdul Rahman, the former Prime Minister, has himself adopted two Chinese children.

<sup>69</sup> Kenelm O. L. Burridge, "Racial Relations in Johore", Australian Journal of Political and History, 2 (May 1957), 155, 157.

<sup>70</sup> Alvin Rabushka, op. cit., 128-133; and idem, "Integration in a Multi-Racial Institution: Ethnic Attitudes among Chinese and Malay Students at the University of Malaya", Race, 11, 1 (July 1969), 60-62.





Table 2.8

Intermarriage among Communal Groups in Kuala  
Lumpur and George Town by Percentage

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<u>Kuala Lumpur</u>	
(N=1,259)	(N=349)
<u>Aggregate Data*</u>	<u>Survey Data**</u>
0.57	0.9
<u>George Town</u>	
(N=945)	(N=367)
<u>Aggregate Data</u>	<u>Survey Data</u>
0.76	1.1

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Source: Alvin Rabushka, Ethnic Components of Political Integration in Two Malayan Cities (Ph.D. Dissertation, Washington University, 1968), 58.

\* The percentage listed as computed for the Aggregate Data is for 1966. Marriages involving Muslims (Malays) are not included as their information was not available at the Registry of Marriages.

\*\* The percentage listed as computed for the sample surveys completed in each city by Survey Research Malaysia in 1967 involves all communal groups, including Muslims. The percentage refers to the extent of intermarriage among survey respondents' parents, rather than the respondents themselves.

of those university students who are unwilling to allow a member of their family to marry an Indian is the highest despite the fact that Indians' way of life and religions are not as restrictive, exclusive and assimilative as Malays'.

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Table 2.9  
Negative Responses about Intermarriage for  
All Respondents by Percentage

(N=175)*	(N=175)	(N=175)
<u>Chinese</u>	Malays	Indians
34**	73	92

Source: Alvin Rabushka, Ethnic Components of Political Integration in Two Malayan Cities (Ph.D. Dissertation, Washington University, 1968), 130.

\* The number in parentheses refers to the total sample of Chinese, Malay and Indian students, rather than just the number of members of one specific communal group.

\*\* The Table reads as follows: of the 175 students in the sample who answered the question on which these tabulations are based, 34 are unwilling to allow a member of their family to marry a Chinese, and so on.

The absence of congeniality between Malaysia's basic religions is an important factor in Malaysian politics as it tends to emphasize the communal pattern of social grouping and interactions.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>71</sup>The role of religion in Malaysian politics has not yet received the proper attention it deserves in intellectual studies. See, however, Gordon P. Means, "The Role of Islam in the Political Development of Malaysia", Comparative Politics, 1, 2 (January 1969), 264-284; idem, "State and Religion in Malaya and Malaysia" in M. M. Thomas and M. Abel (eds.), Religion, State and Ideologies in East Asia (Bangalore, India: East Asia Christian Conference, 1965), 106-126; Charles F. Gallagher, "Contemporary Islam: A Frontier of Communalism - Aspects of Islam in Malaysia", American Universities Field Staff: Southeast Asia Series, 14, 10 (May 1966), 1-24; K. J. Ratnam, "Religion and





The Malays and a number of the indigenous tribes in East Malaysia<sup>72</sup> are exclusively Muslims. As far as this Muslim community is concerned, religion is more a way of life than simply a religious belief. It is still a universal practice that "learning to chant the Koran from cover to cover is a grinding task for Malay children."<sup>73</sup> Not only is this Koranic study a method for the indoctrination of the Islamic faith, it also serves as an important period of general orientation to the Malay way of life. As a matter of fact, the Malay culture is essentially an Islamic culture. The Malay language, customs and habits are deeply intertwined with the Muslim faith. A Malay identity is almost equivalent to a Muslim identity.<sup>74</sup>

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Politics in Malaya", in Robert O. Tilman (ed.), Man, State, and Society in Contemporary Southeast Asia (New York: Praeger, 1969), 351-361; Fred R. von der Mehden, "Some Aspects of Political Ideology in Malaysia" in Robert K. Sakai (ed.), Studies on Asia 1964 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), 95-104; M. Suffian Hashim, "The Relationship between Islam and the State in Malaya", Intisari, 1, 1 (1962), 7-21; and supra, note 66.

<sup>72</sup>The non-Malay components of the Muslim community are as follows: (1) Sarawak: Melanau (70% Muslim), Kedayan (100%), and Bisaya (100%); (2) Sabah: Bajau, Kedayans, Bisayas and "Sabah Other Indigenous", the first three being virtually all Muslims, while a majority of the fourth may admit to being Muslims; (3) 7% of the Kadazans and 3% of the Muruts are also Muslims.

<sup>73</sup>R. O. Winstedt, "Malaysia", in A. J. Arberry and Rom Landau (eds.), Islam Today (London: Faber and Faber, 1943), 218. Most of the schools in today's Malaysia require their Malay students to wear their Malay costumes and songkok on Friday so that at the noon hours they can march in group to the nearby mosques to pray.

<sup>74</sup>The Constitution of Malaysia defines a Malay as "a person who pro-



To Malays ... devoid of a monumental past, bereft of distinguished literature, and lacking even an impressive folk culture before Islam arrived, there is nothing which might serve as the decorative complement to basic Islamic form. And this form is so basic and total in Malay society today that it is the sole repository of meaning and identity. It is the single fixed point of reference from which Malays can envisage their future.<sup>75</sup>

Indeed, Islam is seen by the Malays "as central to their civilization and as indispensable to their survival as a people [and] crucial to the solidarity of the Malays."<sup>76</sup> As a result,

Only through Islam may one marry a Malay, obtain affinal kin, create fully the intimate life based on family and kinship which is the core of the Malay way of life, and until the stranger enters into Islam he must remain one set apart from Malays.<sup>77</sup>

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fesses the Muslim religion, habitually speaks the Malay language, [and] conforms to Malay custom" (Article 160 (2)). As Malay way of life is derived from the practice of Islam, a Malay identity and a Muslim identity are inseparable. This fact was well illustrated in the hearings held by the Singapore Constitutional Commission early in 1966 to discuss constitutional proposals for the new Republic of Singapore. One of the ten Christian Malays in Singapore argued that a "Malay" should be defined as "a person practising Malay customs and traditions" without reference to Islam. The Commissioners held that it was hard to imagine that one could adhere to Malay traditions without being a Muslim. They asked how Malay religious holidays could be observed and Malay greetings exchanged by the Malays who were not Muslims. See Charles F. Gallagher, op. cit., 12-13.

<sup>75</sup> Charles F. Gallagher, op. cit., 13.

<sup>76</sup> Maurice Freedman, "The Growth of A Plural Society ...", op. cit., 164.

<sup>77</sup> Kenelm O. L. Burridge, op. cit., 167.





The intimate relationship between Malay cultural orientations and the Malay-Muslim religion tends to make Malay-Muslim culture exclusive and restrictive in laying down conditions for admission of non-Muslims into the Malay community. This tends to have a far-reaching effect on Malaysian politics and the future of political integration in the country. Because Islam is the most crucial symbol of Malay identity, it is expected that the Malay elites would give special emphasis to the promotion of the Islamic aspect of the Malay culture in the process of building a Malaysian nation based on Malay characteristics. In fact, as pointed out by Gallagher, the practice of the Malay-dominated government in Malaysia in the last decade "has been to strengthen the Islamic content of the state to a point where the religion of one community becomes more than the official state religion and is seen as an inherent part of the entire national personality."<sup>78</sup> As will be seen later in this study, such a course is bound to divide the communities rather than to unite them on a common effort to create a genuine Malaysian nation, because the Malay-Muslim cultural model is not only too restrictive in laying down conditions for the admission of non-Muslims, but also too devoid of utilitarian and identitive appeals, to appear attractive to the non-Malay communities.

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<sup>78</sup>Charles F. Gallagher, *op. cit.*, 15. The Constitution of Malaysia provides that "Islam is the religion of the Federation; but other religions may be practised in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation." (Article 3 (1)).





Malay religious parochialism is reflected, not only in the desire of the Malays "to maintain their cultural and religious solidarity"<sup>79</sup> vis-a-vis the non-Muslim communities, but also in their attitudes toward economic gains. Malay-Muslim religion tends to emphasize the unworthiness of material as against economic pursuits. Consequently, there is a rift between the non-Malay and the Malay attitudes toward status, wealth, and leisure. The Malays respect hereditary aristocracy and religious status rather than possession of wealth. "The rural Malays are reluctant to give up the past ... and fear or dislike the unfamiliar."<sup>80</sup> The Chinese "want money", said one elderly Malay when he was interviewed, "our way is to work in the way of Allah - that is what matters. ... we have been trained to think on Allah, to keep in his way, and to avoid the temptation of becoming merely rich."<sup>81</sup> Such attitudes and the belief that all things are emanations from Allah tend to make the Malays fatalistic in their approach to life and unsusceptible to change.

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<sup>79</sup>Brien K. Parkinson, "Non-Economic Factors ...", op. cit., 40.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 36.

<sup>81</sup>See Kenelm O. L. Burridge, op. cit., 157. Such attitudes have been confirmed by other studies. See, for example, Anne Wee, "Chinese-Malay Relationships: The Conflict of Social Values in a Plural Society" (Abstract), in E. F. SzczePanik (ed.), Symposium on Economic and Social Problems of the Far East (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1962), 429; M. G. Swift, Malay Peasant Society in Jelebu, op. cit., 28-33; and Peter J. Wilson, 70-108.



No Malay political party in Malaysia fails to be conditioned by the religious factors of Malay political culture. The Pan-Malayan Islamic Party, seeking to establish an Islamic and one-race Malaysia, has attracted a considerable following among the Malay peasants, intellectuals and religious elites in the rural and agricultural areas. Similarly, the United Malays National Organization, the dominant component of the ruling Alliance Party, has spent large sum of money in building mosques, and sponsoring pilgrimages to Mecca, Koran recital competitions, and international Islamic conferences as well as other projects relating to the promotion of Islamic education and the display of the symbolic significance of Islam as the state religion of Malaysia. It is true that many of the UMNO's leaders are Western-educated; but the bulk of Malay voters are rural residents who are still dominated by religious parochialism. As a result, the UMNO has been responsive to the Malay-Muslim demands in order to consolidate its support bases in the Malay sector of the society.<sup>82</sup> Of course, the Western-educated Malay elites have not gone so far as to renounce their Westernization; but they do show their determination to uphold Malay-Muslim culture as the core culture of the emerging Malaysian nation. By so doing, they have won the support of the Malay masses but those measures which have been used to win such support also tend to reinforce the parochial outlook of the orang-orang kam-

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<sup>82</sup>The religious policy of the Alliance government will be discussed in greater detail in Part II and Part III of this study.





pong. Thus, Malay-Muslim traditionalism is not only a great barrier to intermarriage and the general intermingling among the members of the various communities in Malaysia. It also tends to make a Malay appear "rather withdrawn, almost chauvinistic, less likely to submit his beliefs to, or accept, those of others, and to be satisfied with looking to his friends, his religion, his techniques and his institutions as the bases for any advancement or inspiration."<sup>83</sup>

The Chinese community in Malaysia practises a mixture of Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist rites. A sizable number of the Chinese have converted to Protestant or Catholic Christianity and a few to Islam. As a whole, Chinese religious outlook is tolerant and eclectic, and in many cases, utilitarian. The flexibility of the Chinese religious outlook is manifested in the fact that Chinese Confucian-Taoist-Buddhists will send their children to a Catholic or Protestant school because it happens to be the best and many families will

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<sup>83</sup>Brien K. Parkinson, "Non-Economic Factors ...", op. cit., 40. Consequently, one could, perhaps, say of Malaysia as has been said of Turkey and Iran: "Islamic traditionalism became the general support given to the status quo (an'anat or tradition) in the face of any proposed change. In practice, this ... mean[s] that what does exist 'ought' to continue to exist ... [and] has been manifested in resisting legislated law that contradicts ... the prescriptions set by Islam, defining the community on religious rather than national grounds, tolerantly acquiescing to a fate presumably ordained by Allah, and generally repudiating political action not designed to further the fortunes of Islam." Richard H. Pfaff, "Disengagement from Traditionalism in Turkey and Iran", Western Political Quarterly, 16, 1 (March 1963), 80-81. See also R. J. Wilkinson, "Malay Customs and Beliefs", reprinted in Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Malayan Branch), 30, 4 (1957), 74.



maintain the family ancestor altars although one or more members have become Christian. For a large number of Chinese, "a god is expected to make a return for the offerings that are made, either by preventing misfortune or by bringing success and wealth. The popularity of a god waxes and wanes as it is successful or not successful in answering prayers and requests."<sup>84</sup> Due to such utilitarian outlook, many Chinese in Malaysia have adopted some Muslim customs and costumes, and Chinese visit to Hindu temples and some Muslim holy places is not uncommon. In the rural areas, most of the Chinese worship Dato' Kong, a Malay god as the Chinese call it.

The tolerant nature of the Chinese and their ability to adhere to two or three sets of beliefs, even contradictory ones, at the same time, deprives their religion of proselytizing force. It has no threats of hell for the disbeliever or promises of heaven for the believer.<sup>85</sup>

In short, the Chinese are more philosophical than religious. They emphasize this worldliness rather than other-worldliness.<sup>86</sup> This

<sup>84</sup>N. J. Ryan, The Cultural Background of the Peoples of Malaya (Kuala Lumpur: Longmans of Malaya Ltd., 1962), 99. See also Marjorie Topley, "Chinese Religion and Religious Institutions in Singapore", Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Malayan Branch), 29, 1 (May 1956), 70-118.

<sup>85</sup>Victor Purcell, The Chinese in Malaya, op. cit., 129.

<sup>86</sup>See Fung Yu-lan, A Short History of Chinese Philosophy (New York: Macmillan Co., 1960), 1-15. It is noteworthy that there is no religious education in Chinese schools in Malaysia except in a few sponsored by the Buddhist monasteries. Most of the young Chinese are now non-affiliated to any religion.





attitude provides one of the driving forces for the Chinese to pursue material gain and cultural and educational advancement.

With a flexible religious outlook, the Chinese are unlikely to become involved in passionate religious quarrels with other religious communities. In Malaysia, however, the Chinese are generally seen by the Malays as being infidel and dirty (kotor) because of their materialistic outlook and their extreme penchant for pork.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, Malay culture is so different from Chinese culture and the Malay-Muslim religion is so exclusive and restrictive that almost all the Chinese find it difficult to adapt to the Malay-Muslim way of life while retaining their Chinese individuality. The effort of the Malay elites to make Malay-Muslim religion an inherent part of the emerging Malaysian identity has generated great resentment among the Chinese because such effort ignores completely the multicultural realities of the Malaysian society. Chinese resentment has been deepened by the recent measure to prohibit the sale of pork in all school canteens or cafeterias despite the fact that not all schools in Malaysia have Muslim students.<sup>88</sup>

The Indians in Malaysia, like their counterparts in India, practise a variety of religious faiths. The large majority, however,

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<sup>87</sup>See Peter J. Wilson, op. cit., 22-31 and passim.

<sup>88</sup>According to an order of March 26, 1969 issued by the Selangor Department of Education, even the provision of pork for the consumption of school's canteen personnel is not permitted. See Sin Chew Jit Poh, March 31, 1969, 10; and April 2, 1969, 12.





are Hindus (approximately 80%). The remainder are Muslims (9%), Christians (6%), Sikhs (3%) and the followers of other faiths.<sup>89</sup> As there is a lack of research on the religious outlook of the Indian community in Malaysia, general statements can hardly be made. One may assume, however, that the Hindu religious outlook appears to be relatively less restrictive and more flexible than the Malay-Muslim. Like the Chinese, a sizable of the Indians have converted to the Christian faith but very few Malays have ever become a Buddhist, a Hindu or a Christian. Furthermore, the general impression seems to be that intermarriage between the Indians and the Chinese (especially within the professional circle) appears to be more frequent than that between Muslims and non-Muslims.

On the part of the Chinese, intermarriage between them and the Malays appears to be unacceptable not so much because of the difference of "race" but because of the change of the way of life that it will entail. For a non-Muslim, to marry a Malay girl means masuk Melayu (which literally translated, means "to enter the Malays") and thus assimilation to the Malay culture and ways of life. This appears

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<sup>89</sup> No recent statistics of Indians by religious orientations are available but according to the 1931 data, out of the 621,847 Indians in Malaya at that time, 81.5% were Hindus; 9% Muslims; 5.9% Christians; 2.9% Sikhs; and the remainder practised a variety of faiths such as Buddhism, Jainism, and Zoroastrianism. For a brief account of Indian religions in Malaysia, see Kernal Singh Sandhu, Indians in Malaya: Some Aspects of Their Immigration and Settlement (1786-1957) (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 233-235; and Sinnappah Arasaratnam, op. cit., 162-177.



to be culturally unacceptable as well as unChinese to the Chinese. On the one hand, as A. Doak Barnett stated in his report, "The Chinese ... regard Malay culture as being so inferior to their own that the idea of Malay assimilation of Chinese now strikes them as unthinkable, and even amusing."<sup>90</sup> On the other, the fact that intermarriage between the Chinese and the Malays means masuk Melayu runs against the Chinese concept of the family and the Chinese tradition of ancestor worship. Chinese family is patrilineal and man-centered. When a Chinese man marries a girl, she should become a member of the man's family. The contrary is rarely acceptable by Chinese norms. Thus, the Chinese concept of family ties, filial piety and ancestor worship comes into direct conflict with the idea of masuk Melayu which requires a complete loss of Chinese identity and behavioral patterns. Such a conflict seems to account for the lack of intermarriage between the Chinese and the Malays, even in the period before the 1930's when the ratio between Chinese males and females was about 1,000 to 200.

The above observation seems to suggest that "race", if the term is defined narrowly as a group of people exhibiting certain physical characteristics in common, is overshadowed by cultural differences as a barrier to national integration in Malaysia. It is not racialism in its narrow sense but communalism with its cultural paro-

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<sup>90</sup>A. Doak Barnett, op. cit., 5.





chialism that sets one community apart from another. This is not to say, however, that "race" is not an important factor differentiating the various communities in the country. In fact, racial stereotypes are deep-rooted in the Malaysian environment, and one community of people usually represents a particular image to the other.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, the present subsidiary status of the racial factor in Malaysian politics "can be greatly altered by changing economic or political events."<sup>92</sup> For example, the communal riots in the summer of 1969 have generated intercommunal bitterness and hostility along purely racial lines.<sup>93</sup>

As a matter of fact, looking at the political trends in Malaysia in the past two decades or so, one cannot help recognizing that there has been a growing tendency for the factor of "race" to assume its political relevance in the politics of nation-building .

Race becomes socially meaningful when biologically inherited characteristics are correlated, or tend to match up with, social characteristics which are considered especially desirable, such as a lot of education, or especially undesirable, such as low income. When a con-

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<sup>91</sup>Racial stereotypes will be discussed later in this study.

<sup>92</sup>Guy Hunter, op. cit., 10.

<sup>93</sup>See John Slimming, Malaysia: Death of a Democracy (London: John Murray, 1969), 25-80; and Felix V. Gagliano, Communal Violence in Malaysia 1969: The Political Aftermath (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies, Papers in International Studies, Southeast Asia Series No. 13, 1970), 9-28.



dition which is rewarding or punishing is highly correlated with race, then race is a convenient short-hand for specifying the boundaries of groups enjoying or suffering that condition.<sup>94</sup>

The correlations between race and the social characteristics of the various communities in Malaysia have been present in a very conspicuous way. As seen earlier, both political and economic powers in the country have been, and still are, distributed unevenly among the races. This uneven distribution did not, however, become the central focus of political conflict before the Second World War, because, as a third party, the British were able to maintain a balance between the Malays and the immigrant non-Malay groups. The Malays were recognized by the British as the rightful owners of the country while the non-Malay immigrants were regarded as temporary residents who were there helping the development of the country's economy. As a result, both groups played complementary roles to each other with little direct competition for the same interests - the Chinese (and the Indians as well), being regarded as aliens, were interested only in making money and being left alone, while the Malay elites were given a share to associate with the country's administration as the rightful owners of the soil and the Malay masses were encouraged to stick to the rural

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<sup>94</sup>Raymond W. Mack, "Race, Class, and Power in Barbados: A Study of Stratification as an Integrating Force in a Democratic Revolution", in Herbert R. Barringer, et. al. (eds.), Social Change in Developing Areas: A Reinterpretation of Evolutionary Theory (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Publishing Co., 1965), 133-134.



land. This situation began to change after the Second World War when the various communities had to face one another to formulate a system in which they could share power.

Now the Malays become conscious of the economic gap between them and the non-Malays, whereas the non-Malays, aspiring to be equal partners in the newly independent Malaysian nation, begin to realize the power gap between them and the Malays. The result is a direct clash of interests, a direct competition between the communities for the same political and economic status. In this clash, the non-Malays are pressing for political equality and full acceptance, while the Malays are seeking to achieve economic equality with the non-Malays and, at the same time, to perpetuate their political preponderance, by claiming the right to special privileges and insisting on the cultural assimilation of the non-Malays as an approach to nation-building in Malaysia. This clash finds its concrete expression in the conflict between the concept of bumiputeraism and the idea of a Malaysian Malaysia.

The belief in Malay supremacy is deep-rooted in Malay political culture and the political history of the Malayan peninsula, and it will be treated with greater details in Part II of this study. It is sufficient here to point out that although the term bumiputra is new in Malaysian political vocabulary, it is derived from the concept of

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Malay supremacy. In fact, it was formulated in 1965 to justify the grant of special rights to the Malay community. The Kongress Ekonomi Bumiputra Malaysia (The Economic Congress of the Bumiputra of Malaysia) held its first annual meeting in Kuala Lumpur on June 4, 1965 under the sponsorship of the Ministry of National and Rural Development and the UMNO. The aim of the Congress was to generate an interest among the Malays and the indigenous people to participate in commerce and industry and to provide facilities for training and financing those interested in the two fields.<sup>95</sup> Since 1965, the government has provided a large sum of money to finance the MARA (Majilis Amanah Ra'ayat Bumiputra - Council of Trust for the Bumiputra People), the MARA Institute of Technology, the Bumiputra Bank and other investment projects designed to uplift the economic position of the bumiputra.<sup>96</sup> There has been no controversy in Malaysia as to the need to help the poor and the underprivileged sector of the society; but the assistance has been provided by the government in the form of further dividing the population of Malaysia along racial lines. Now the people of Malaysia are officially classified into two categories: the bumiputra (sons of the soil) and the non-bumiputra. A Chinese, or for that

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<sup>95</sup>See The Straits Times, May 5, 1965, p. 18; June 5, 1965, p. 13; June 6, 1965, p. 16; June 7, 1965, p. 20; and its editorial, June 11, 1965, p. 8.

<sup>96</sup>J. H. Beaglehole, op. cit., 216-245.



matter, an Indian, who was born in the country and is a citizen by the operation of law, is not considered a bumiputra, even if several generations of his family were local-born as well. Thus, the line of division is purely racial; and nothing has done more than such a division to arouse and stimulate racial consciousness and antagonism among the various segments of the Malaysian population.

The rationale for the bumiputra-non-bumiputra division is the claim that the Malay race was the first to arrive and settle in Malaysia. The fact of prior residence, it is claimed, confers upon the Malay race certain legitimate privileges and rights not open to later-arriving residents, because the Malay people are the sons of the soil. The concept of bumiputraisim insists that since Malaysia was a Malay country, it should continue to be a Malay nation and that the Malaysian community and culture should be the extension of the Malay community and culture. In 1952, Tunku Abdul Rahman, after succeeding Onn bin Ja'afar as the President of the UMNO, demanded that "Malaya is for the Malays and it should not be governed by a mixture of races."<sup>97</sup> By the same token, Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, the former President of the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP), declared in 1957

First and foremost it should be emphasized that Malaya belongs to the Malays and they are the masters in

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<sup>97</sup>The Tunku's speech at the annual meeting of the Seremban Division of the UMNO. See The Straits Times, July 1, 1952, 5. The claim that Malaysia is a Malay country will be evaluated in Part II and III below.





this country. It is to the Malays as the rightful owners that this country should be returned. The Malays should not be asked to pay for the mistakes of the imperialists in bringing non-Malays into the country. This does not mean that we must push non-Malays out, but there must be a distinction between the aliens and the masters.<sup>98</sup>

The non-Malays' "entry to Malaysia", declared the Sultan of Perak in 1966, "was not through invitation and the return would not be prevented."<sup>99</sup> Well expressed in these statements is the Malay sentiment of bumiputrazism, a sentiment which insists that Malaysia is a Malay country and the political rights and status of the non-Malays should be determined by the will of the bumiputraz. Since the demise of the Malayan Union plan in the mid-1940's, such sentiment has been, and still is, the dominant force shaping the nation-building policy of the country. Even after the racial riots in 1969, during which "the faith of the Chinese community [and it should be added, the Indian community as well] in the

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<sup>98</sup>The Straits Times, March 22, 1957, 5. This statement was made in connection with the Report of the Reid Constitutional Commission of 1957.

<sup>99</sup>Utusan Melayu, November 21, 1966. Statements of the same nature made by Malay political leaders and the royalties are too numerous to mention here in detail; but see, for example, the opening speech of the Rajah of Perlis at the General Assembly of the UMNO held at the Francis Light School in Penang on April 23, 1948, in which he said: "I need not remind Malays that this country belonged to them in the past and that it shall continue to belong to them now and in the future. To ensure this, I ask the Malays to show unity, cooperation and preservation." The Straits Times, April 24, 1948, 4.



justice they are likely to get at the hands of a Malay government has almost entirely evaporated",<sup>100</sup> Tunku Abdul Rahman, the then Prime Minister of Malaysia, still insisted that "this nation had been accepted by all the other races living here as being fundamentally a Malay country, and this will remain so ...".<sup>101</sup>

It is thus clear that bumiputraisim is an expression of Malay communalism in its extreme form. It not only requires that all non-Malay communities recognize the permanency of Malay special status and political ascendancy. It also requires that the model on the basis of which the Malaysian nation is to be built should be Malay. Loyalty to Malaysia is thus defined as the acceptance of Malay supremacy. Malay nationalism is equated with Malaysian nationalism, and the process of nation-building with the process of Malayization. As the sentiment of bumiputraisim has been expressed in a rigid and uncompromising way, Malay supremacy cannot be challenged by the non-Malays without their being labelled as "disloyal" or "subversive elements" and being threatened with deprivation of citizenship and deportation. The 1969 racial riots and the part the Malay-dominated government played in them seem to have reduced the confidence and trust of the non-Malay communities in the Malay elites to the lowest point. "Resentment and

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<sup>100</sup>"Confidence the Victim", editorial, The Times (London), Monday, May 19, 1969, 9.

<sup>101</sup>May 13: Before and After, op. cit., 147. Emphasis added.





distrust are elements of disaffection and the first step toward resistance."<sup>102</sup> But "full understanding cannot be reached except on the basis of mutual respect and with a mutual acknowledgment of good faith and the acceptance of the principle that the purpose of understanding is to protect all valid interests."<sup>103</sup> In Malaysia, however, the development of such understanding is impeded by the vigorous assertion of Malay supremacy. As the dividing line between a bumiputra and a non-bumiputra is drawn on the basis of racial origin rather than on citizenship qualifications, it tends to polarize the population into two antagonistic camps embarking on a collision course.

Closely related to the concept of bumiputraism is the idea of establishing a Greater Malaysia or a Melayu Raya (Great Malay) including the present Malaysia, Indonesia, and possibly the Philippines and Southern Thailand, in which "the [Malay] race ... would be controlling the skies and waters in this part of the world."<sup>104</sup> As will be seen in Part II in this study, the idea of a Melayu Raya has been a long-standing aspiration closely associated with the Pan-Islamic religious movements and the left-wing Malay political activities in

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<sup>102</sup> Joel D. Aberbach and Jack L. Walker, "Political Trust and Racial Ideology", American Political Science Review, 64, 4 (December 1970), 1199.

<sup>103</sup> George Sabine, "The Two Democratic Traditions", The Philosophical Review, 61 (1952), 471. As quoted in Aberbach and Walker, loc. cit..

<sup>104</sup> Utusan Melayu, editorial, August 13, 1966.





Malaya. Such aspiration was encouraged by the Japanese during the Second World War. In the immediate post-war period, the Malay Students' Society in Britain and the left-wing political movements at home pressed for a union with Indonesia<sup>105</sup> but they did not succeed due to the lack of support from the Malay royalties and the Western-educated elites within the UMNO. However, the aspiration for a Melayu Raya is still a considerable political force in the Malay society and the cultural and emotional ties of the Malaysian Malays with Indonesia still remain very real and alive among the Malay villagers.<sup>106</sup> This seems to provide an explanation why the Maphilindo proposal embodied in the Manila Accord of 1963 had received enthusiastic response from certain sections of the Malay community and mass media in Malaysia.

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<sup>105</sup>See Memorandum of the Malay Students' Society in Great Britain to the British Government concerning post-war constitution-making in Malaya, as reprinted in James de V. Allen, The Malayan Union (Yale University: Southeast Asia Studies, Monograph No. 10, 1967), 132-134.

<sup>106</sup>The emotional ties of the Malays with Indonesia is well described in Peter J. Wilson's study: "For many villagers ... Indonesia is not an abstract generality, a country that exists somewhere far away. It is a concept translatable into personal kinship between individuals. ... Indonesia, and particularly Sumatra, is looked on by many as the authentic source of Malay culture .... Thus during the time of Confrontation, the attitude of villagers to Indonesia was far from belligerent. ... the general opinion ... was that Indonesians and Malays would not fight one another (they are saudara, even keluarga, i.e., kinsmen) and the whole affair was a monstrous joke perpetuated by Subandrio, Aidit, and the Chinese, principally Lee Kuan Yew, Prime Minister of Singapore. The latter, it was believed, was seeking a way of ridding Singapore of its Malay population." "Sukarno ... was viewed as being a far more authentic Malay person" than Tunku Abdul Rahman, who, as a Prime Minister, was respected, but "as a Malay ... was frequently derided and spoken of as being more like an orang puteh [white man] than a Malay." Op. cit., 33-34.



Although Indonesian Confrontation against Malaysia in 1963-1966 had temporarily pushed the idea of a Greater Malaysia into the background, it was, even during the period of hostility, very much alive in the mind of some Malay groups and leaders.<sup>107</sup> With the end of the Confrontation in 1966, the idea was reactivated. As pointed out by one observer, "the positive response to Bangkok [Agreement, which ended the Confrontation] was essentially a reflection of a new sense of confidence among the Malay community ... [which] began to look forward with enthusiasm to a union dominated by Indonesia which would ensure the preservation of cultural identity."<sup>108</sup> This enthusiasm was well expressed by an editorial of the Utusan Melayu (a semi-official Malay Jawi newspaper which Tunku Abdul Rahman described as "the voice of the Malays"):

Peace between Indonesia and Malaysia  
is not mere peace between two friends  
who were at enmity. ... It means  
peace between an elder brother and  
younger brother who are of the same  
parents. ...  
Our blood is Indonesia's blood, and  
our flesh is Indonesia's flesh. How

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<sup>107</sup> During the period of Confrontation, a number of influential Malay political and religious leaders were charged with conspiracy with Indonesia. Among them were Dr. Burhanuddin (PMIP's President), Inche Ishak bin Haji Mohammad (President of the Socialist Front and the Labor Party) and Inche Aziz bin Ishak (President of the Convention Party and former Alliance's Minister of Agriculture).

<sup>108</sup> Michael Leifer in The Times (London), August 31, 1966.





can flesh and blood be separated unless we reach the tomb?

Based on recent developments, it seems clear that the rolls of the waves in the Malacca Straits are signing the song of 'longing hearts' between two similar nations. What Indonesia is longing for, we also long for. Indonesia's frustration is our frustration. And our longing toward Indonesia is like the longing of a younger brother toward his elder brother who has travelled far and wide, and who has now returned home and is standing at the doorway.<sup>109</sup>

Dato Haji Mohamed Asri bin Haji Muda, the Acting President of the PMIP, also voiced his support for the Maphilindo concept which, he said, "could reestablish as one race the people of the same stock, who have lived for quite a long time in disunity under the banners of various colonialists."<sup>110</sup> In recent years, Indonesia's influence in Malaysia seems to have increased, especially in the fields of culture and education. With the gradual adoption of Malay as the medium

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<sup>109</sup> Utusan Melayu, Editorial, May 5, 1966. Emphasis added. In response to this editorial, C. V. Devan Nair, the former MP of the Democratic Action Party, asked in the Parliament: "Are we to believe that if the Nanyang Siang Pau or Sin Chew Jit Poh had in the same ecstatic[sic] language exhorted the Malaysian Chinese never to forget their flesh is the flesh of the 700 million Chinese in China, and that the Malaysian Chinese can never be separated from the 700 million Chinese in China until death intervenes, are we to believe that the Utusan Melayu and the hon'ble Member of Johore Tenggara would have applauded in approval or delight or sought to justify it in this House?" As reprinted in The Rocket, 1, 1 (August 1966), 8. The Utusan Melayu described Devan Nair's criticisms as "anti-national." See Utusan Melayu, June 14, 1966.

<sup>110</sup> Utusan Melayu, August 13, 1966.



of instruction in the University of Malaya, the establishment of the National University, and the rapid expansion of Malay secondary and technical education, Indonesia has now become the only major source of Malay teachers and reading materials. As will be seen later, while the Chinese and Indian population has become increasingly isolated from China and India, the Malay community has become more subject to the attraction of Indonesia.

With the forceful assertion of the sentiment of bumiputraism on the part of the Malay community, "race" may possibly emerge as an important factor in Malaysian politics in the years to come. In fact, the concept of a Greater Malaysia is essentially a racial one. It asserts the supremacy of the Malay race not only in Malaysia alone, but in the Malay archipelago as a whole. The open enthusiasm of the Malays for the idea of bumiputraism and its extension, a Melayu Raya, has given the non-Malay a clear view of Malay attitudes and intentions that had been previously partially concealed. This has caused considerable anxiety and fear among the non-Malay communities, particularly the Chinese, who do not see any political and economic future for them in a Malay Malaysia or a Melayu Raya. This explains why the non-Malay communities are more inclined to support political agitations for the establishment of a Malaysian Malaysia.

To sum up, Malaysia has a communal pattern of social group-

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ings. As horizontal ties among members of each community are strong while identification among members across communities is weak, the degree of political trust and confidence among political actors is low. Socially speaking, the degree of mutual trust and identification among members of different communities is so low that a Chinese motorist has to run for his life if he gets involved in an accident with a Malay in a Malay area, or vice versa.<sup>111</sup> Mutual distrust is accentuated by the awareness that political and economic powers are wielded in the hands of different communities. Both the Malay and the non-Malay communities see inequalities and injustice in the society and harbor suspicions of the motives and intentions of one another. The Malays tend to see non-Malay demands for political equality and full acceptance as being a threat to their status as bumiputra and as being an attempt to keep the Malay community in permanent poverty, whereas the Chinese and Indians fear that "Malay domination will be used to interfere with their economic and property rights ... and that Malay power aims at destroying their right to maintain their ... culture."<sup>112</sup> Although Malay political culture has been dominating the entire political scene of Malaysia and is being held up as the model

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<sup>111</sup> Law requires that a motorist should remain at the scene of accident if he is a party to it. In many circumstances, a motorist in Malaysia, if involved in an accident, has no choice but to run to the nearest police station to report and ask for protection first.

<sup>112</sup> Felix Victor Gagliano, Jr., Political Input ..., op. cit., 185.





of nation-building, its legitimacy is far from being established. It is true that the people of Malaysia as a whole are now firmly attached to the country; but their vertical ties or identification with the Malaysian polity have not been unified. The Malays tend to identify with Malaysia as being a Malay country with the Malay community and culture as the core foundation, whereas the Chinese and the Indians tend to see Malaysia as a multiracial, multicultural, and multilingual country in which every one of the component communities constitutes only one dimension of the Malaysian identity. In Sabah and Sarawak, identification with the larger community of Malaysia has not yet fully developed.<sup>113</sup>

It can thus be seen that the integrative crisis in Malaysia has emerged in the form of a conflict between the Malay demands for economic equality and cultural and political supremacy on the one hand and the non-Malay demands for political equality and full acceptance of their cultures on the other. Such a conflict is conditioned and shaped by the factors of numerical strength of the communities, and the distribution of political and economic powers between the Malays and the non-Malays. Among these factors, the fact that the Malays are both politically and militarily preponderant is the most crucial. Thus to understand the scope of the Malaysian integrative crisis and to sug-

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<sup>113</sup>"In Sabah and Sarawak", one newspaper wrote in 1967, "many people feel hostile to Malaysia because they do not cherish being ruled from Kuala Lumpur. They do not want independence within Malaysia but as separate national entities." "Discord in Sabah", editorial, Eastern Sun, July 21, 1967.



gest improvement or solutions, one is required to look into the historical evolution of Malay supremacy and the communal pattern of social groupings, the impacts of the Japanese invasion, the Malayan Union crisis and the Emergency on communal outlooks and relations, and the constitutional framework of a Malay Malaysia as embodied in the so-called "racial bargain". These questions are examined in certain historical and descriptive details in the next three chapters.

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PART II

HISTORICAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATIONS  
OF MALAY SUPREMACY



### CHAPTER III

#### BRITISH RULE, MALAY SUPREMACY AND COMMUNAL OUTLOOKS

The political attitudes and orientations of the members of a political system are shaped not only according to their direct political experiences with their polity and their fellow citizens but also by the "political memories passed from generation to generation and the ways these memories are formed."<sup>1</sup> In seeking the roots of political culture, one is thus compelled to examine the historical experiences of a nation for their impacts on the political beliefs, behavior and outlooks of the individuals and groups. One can hardly understand, for example, the international behavior of the political elites of China without giving due consideration to the great crises in China's history and the ways in which these crises were resolved and live in the memories of the Chinese people. The talk of the pre-Stalin and post-Stalin generations in the Soviet Union also indicates that historical

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<sup>1</sup>Sidney Verba, "Comparative Political Culture", in Lucian W. Pye and Sidney Verba (eds.), Political Culture and Political Development (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965), 554.



association with the polity and fellow political actors is significant in the formation of the political culture of a nation. Similarly, one cannot deal with Malaysian political attitudes in a proper way without referring to a number of important events and crises in the political history of the country and the manner in which they arose and were resolved. In his chapter, an effort is made to relate the fragmented and isolative nature of the Malaysian political culture, the political dominance of the Malay community, and the communal pattern of political orientations and outlooks of the various communities to the historical process of state- and nation-building in the Malay peninsula up to the outbreak of the Second World War. The impacts of such important political crises as the Japanese Occupation, the Malayan Union dispute and the Emergency on communal relations and the constitutional foundation of Malay supremacy will be examined in the next two chapters.

### State-Building: An Overview

One of the major determinants of the sense of national identity of the members of a political system is the set of historical events or crises by which the state was formed. This sequence of crises and the ways in which they arise and are confronted and settled are referred to by modern political inquirers as the process of state-building.<sup>2</sup> In Malaysia, the process through which the various units have

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<sup>2</sup>See, supra, Chapter I, 21-23.





been brought into the present political entity is long and complicated. For the purpose of this study, a brief overview will suffice. More space will be devoted to an examination of the salient features of this historical process and their impacts upon communal orientations.

Before 1400 when the Malacca Empire was first established by Prince Parameswara from Sumatra, the present component units of Malaysia had usually been "an outlying region of an empire which had its capital elsewhere."<sup>3</sup> The Malacca Empire which "marked the beginning of an indigenous system of the major political units in the Malay peninsula"<sup>4</sup> was terminated by the Portuguese occupation of the city of Malacca in 1511. The disintegration of the Malacca Empire resulted in the birth of the new state of Perak and the consolidation of the Johore Empire (including Pahang) which nominally laid claim to succeed the former position of Malacca, whereas Kedah, Kelantan and Trengganu were subject to Siamese suzerainty. In 1641, the Portuguese in Malacca were replaced by the Dutch who were to be superseded by

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<sup>3</sup>N. J. Ryan, The Making of Modern Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1967), 9. At various times, one or several of the component units of today's Malaysia were under the control or influence of the following empires: Fu-nan in the Mekong delta (100-700 A.D.), Srivijaya in Sumatra (700-1100 A.D.), the Kingdom of Sukhotai in Thailand (1200 A.D.) and the Javanese Kingdom of Majapahit (1300 A.D.). In the early 15th century, Malacca also came under the influence of China.

<sup>4</sup>J. M. Gullick, Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya (London: Athlone Press, 1958), 7.



the British in 1795. Both the Portuguese and the Dutch in Malacca were surrounded by hostile Malay kingdoms in the peninsula and the Indonesian archipelago and wars had been frequent during the three centuries after 1511. However, the conflicts and rivalries within and between the Malay courts had resulted in their disunity and provided numerous opportunities for the Europeans to meddle in the affairs of the hinterlands at their pleasure.

The Portuguese and the Dutch were mainly interested in Malacca as a trading port. Although they had intervened in the affairs of the Malay states, none of them had taken over the government of any extensive territories in the peninsula. For this reason, colonial rule did not truly begin in this part of the world until the British intervention in the last quarter of the 18th century. In 1786 the British East India Company extended its control to the Penang Island on the west coast of the peninsula through the visit of Captain Francis Light. In 1800, Province Wellesley, a strip of territory on the mainland opposite the island, was bought by the British from the Sultan of Perak. This control was later repeated in Singapore in 1819 and officially extended to Malacca in 1824.<sup>5</sup> In 1867 these three

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<sup>5</sup>In 1795 the Dutch transferred Malacca to the British to prevent it from falling into the hands of the French during the Napoleonic Wars. Permanent cession of Malacca by the Dutch to the British was finalized in the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824 which clarified the respective spheres of influence of the two colonial powers in South and South-east Asia. See N. J. Ryan, *op. cit.*, 86-88, 95-96. See also Nicholas Tarling, Anglo-Dutch Rivalry in the Malay World 1780-1824 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1961).





territories - Penang, Singapore and Malacca - were brought under the direct control of the British Colonial Office and known as the Crown Colony of the Straits Settlements.

In the Borneo states, colonial rule came in the same period. In 1841, as a reward for his successful assistance in suppressing a local rebellion of the Dyaks and Malays against the misrule of the Brunei governor, James Brooke, a British subject, was installed as Rajah and Governor of Sarawak by the sultan of Brunei. Up to the early 1880's, American, Austrian and British trading companies had, either separately or in partnership, held settlements in North Borneo (Sabah). The American company failed to prosper whereas the British was able in 1881 to buy out the Austrian and formed the British North Borneo Company which marked the beginning of colonial rule. Both the Brooke family in Sarawak and the British North Borneo Company in Sabah had expanded their territories between 1882 and 1906 at the expense of Brunei until the latter accepted British protection late in the 1900's.<sup>6</sup>

Official British intervention in the Malay states of the peninsula<sup>7</sup> began with the Pangkor Engagement signed on January 20, 1874 bet-

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<sup>6</sup> See Sir S. Runciman, The White Rajahs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960); K. G. Tregonning, Under Chartered Company Rule: North Borneo 1881-1946 (Singapore: University of Malaya Press, 1958); and Leigh R. Wright, "The Partition of Brunei", Asian Studies, 5, 2 (August 1967), 282-302.

<sup>7</sup> For an analysis of the factors leading to British penetration into the Malay states, see Rupert Emerson, Malaysia: A Study in Direct and Indirect Rule (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1964), 112-134 (Emerson's work was first published by Macmillan Co., New York, in 1937); C. D. Cowan, Nineteenth-Century Malaya: The Origins of British



ween the Governor of the Straits Settlements and the Malay chiefs of Perak. The treaty, besides settling the succession dispute in that state, stipulated that the sultan of Perak was to accept the appointment of a British Resident and his advice "must be asked and acted upon on all questions other than those touching Malay religion and custom."<sup>8</sup> This pattern of British penetration was repeated in Selangor and Negri Sembilan on the west coast and Pahang on the east coast in the years from 1874 to 1888; and in 1895 these three states and Perak were brought together by the British to form the Federated Malay States (F.M.S.). In 1909, Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu were added to the British protectorate system under a cession treaty signed between the British and the Siamese government. Johore accepted the Residential system in 1914 after a long period of British de facto control. These five states, although they were equally put under the British Residential system, were given the negative title of Unfederated Malay States (UMS), because, compared to the FMS, a

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Political Control (London: Oxford University Press, 1961); Lennox Mills, British Rule in Eastern Asia (London: Oxford University Press, 1942); C. Northcote Parkinson, British Intervention in Malaya 1867-1877 (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1964); D. MacIntyre, "Britain's Intervention in Malaya: The Origin of Lord Kimberley's Instructions to Sir Andrew Clarke", Journal of Southeast Asian History, 2, 2 (1961), 47-69; Yen Ching Hwang, "A Study of the Pangkor Treaty" (in Chinese), Collected Research Articles: University Week Souvenir Publication (Singapore: Nanyang University Students' Union, 1960); 163-171; and Philip Fook Seng Loh, The Malay States 1877-1895 (London: Oxford University Press, 1970).

<sup>8</sup>Text in W. G. Maxwell and W. S. Gibson. Treaties and Engagements Affecting the Malay States and Borneo (London: Truscott, 1924), 28ff.





considerable degree of their political separateness and administrative autonomy had been maintained.

To sum up, British expansion in the Malay peninsula and its surrounding areas resulted in five patterns of political control: 1. the Straits Settlements of Singapore, Penang, and Malacca; 2. the Federated Malay States of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan, and Pahang; 3. the Unfederated Malay States of Johore, Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu; 4. Brooke family dynastic rule in Sarawak; and 5. British chartered company rule in North Borneo (Sabah). These five patterns were to remain essentially unchanged until the Japanese invasion in 1942.

Under the Japanese Occupation Administration, Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu were put under the control of the Japanese authorities in Thailand, whereas the three Straits Settlements were incorporated as Japanese territory and Singapore served as the administrative center of the occupation forces. Other Malay states in the peninsula were ruled by the Japanese directors who were assigned to replace the British Residents as the rulers' advisers.<sup>9</sup> After the War, both the FMS and the UMS and Malacca and Penang were brought together by the British Military Administration in 1945-46 to form the Malayan Union, a unitary entity under the direct control of the British

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<sup>9</sup>See Yoji Akashi, "Japanese Military Administration in Malaya - Its Formation and Evolution in Reference to Sultans, the Islamic Religion, and the Moslem-Malays, 1941-1945", Asian Studies, 7, 1 (April 1969), 81-110.





Colonial Office. Due to strong Malay opposition, the Union was short-lived and it was superseded by the formation of the Federation of Malaya on February 1, 1948, in which the states and their rulers were to retain certain definite powers and the special position of the Malay community was given constitutional recognition and protection. The Federation of Malaya Agreement of 1948 was to become the basis of the Malayan Constitution of 1957 when the Federation gained its political independence from Britain.

Singapore was excluded in post-war arrangements and remained a British Crown Colony. It acquired the status of internal self-government in 1959. Immediately after the Second World War, the Borneo states were ruled by British Military Administration. North Borneo (Sabah) was declared a British Crown Colony on July 5, 1946 after the British government had accepted the petition of the British North Borneo Company to transfer its control to the Crown. In April 1946, the control of Sarawak was restored to the Brooke family but the white Rajah later decided to cede the territory to the British government. As a result, it became a British Crown Colony in July 1, 1946. These two Borneo states and Singapore joined with the Federation of Malaya to form the new Federation of Malaysia in September 1963. In August 1965, Singapore left the new Federation and became an independent republic.

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It can be seen from this brief account that "From the earliest times the history of the Malayan peninsula has been less a Malayan history than that of the essentially foreign interests which happened to converge upon it."<sup>10</sup> In other words, the development of the present Malaysian entity was less a result of the spontaneous interactions among the various units than a product of economic, military and administrative expediency of foreign interests. Great empires had flourished in the Malay archipelago before the arrival of the Europeans. The Malacca Empire, for example, prior to the Portuguese invasion in 1511, included most of Malaya as far north as Kedah and Patani and a large portion of Sumatra and was strong enough to protect the whole peninsula from the Siamese attack. With the advent of European intervention, empires in the Malay archipelago were first weakened and then broken and disintegrated. In the case of the peninsula, the demise of the Malacca Empire gave birth to a number of small Malay kingdoms in which each was ruled in a despotic fashion by a sultan or a raja and a number of district chiefs. To be sure, some of these kingdoms, such as the Johore Empire in the 16th and 17th centuries and the Bugis in Johore in the 18th century, had grown in strength and at times become powerful enough to challenge the European powers in the area. But frequent rivalries within and among

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<sup>10</sup> Norton Ginsberg and Chester F. Roberts, Jr., Malaya (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1958), 421.





the sultanates and the cleavages among the district chiefs had set the various Malay kingdoms in the peninsula apart, and sometimes, on a collision course with one another. In these struggles for supremacy both in each state and in the peninsula as a whole, a central authority might have eventually emerged if foreign intervention had not been brought into the picture. But, as it turned out, the native rulers and their local chiefs had usually linked themselves closely with the intrigues of the Europeans until they were finally taken completely by the British in the last quarter of the 18th century. The result was "galling and ... harmful" because "the natural development of a Malayan polity was checked and perverted."<sup>11</sup>

Islam was introduced to the Malay peninsula through the Arab traders in the early 15th century, and in 1445 it replaced Hinduism as the state religion of the Malacca Empire. As Islam is more a way of life than simply a religious belief, its subsequent acceptance by the ra'ayat (common people or subjects) of all the Malay kingdoms in the area had thrown the seed of a unifying agent in Malay society. Despite political differences and disunity among the Malay states in the peninsula, they were all Mohammedan monarchies following basically

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<sup>11</sup>Rupert Emerson, op. cit., 15. "It is not improbable", another author commented in 1929, "that a central authority would have been formed in the Malay Archipelago after 1500 (in the same way that the kingdoms of Malayu, Crivijaya and Modjopait were able to maintain their power for centuries), if the European economic and administrative interference had not taken place." W. Middendorp, "The Administration of the Outer Provinces of the Netherlands Indies" in B. Schrieke (ed.), The Effect of Western Influence (Batavia, 1929), 43. As quoted in Rupert Emerson, op. cit., 15, note 7.



the same pattern of social ordering and power relationship.<sup>12</sup> It is true that prior to the British protectorate period, there was already "a general awareness that all Malays were Muslims and ... this distinguished them from, for example, Chinese or Siamese";<sup>13</sup> but this identification had so far remained a negative potentiality rather

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<sup>12</sup>For an analysis of the indigenous Malay social and political systems in western Malaya, see J. M. Gullick, *op. cit.*; B. A. R. Mokhzani, "The Study of Social Stratification and Social Mobility in Malaya", *East Asian Cultural Studies*, 4 (March 1965), 138-162; and R. O. Winstedt, *The Malays: A Cultural History* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 6th edition, 1961), 18-138. In summary terms, Malay society was divided into two main groups: the ruling class and the subject class. In each state, on top of the ruling class was an hereditary monarch described by the Malay title yang di-pertuan (he who is made lord) or by the Hindu term for ruler, raja. The word sultan was not widely used until after the 19th century. The ruler was assisted by his kinsmen in the royal lineage and a number of executive assistants, and supported by a group of district chiefs who had in turn under their command a number of minor chiefs and penghulu (headmen) at the village level. The ruler, as Allah's Caliph and shadow on earth, was a source of rank and authority, a symbol of order and unity, and a person of great dignity; but in terms of actual power, he was more or less a de jure figurehead depending upon the support of the territorial chiefs who collected revenues and mobilized manpower for state projects and actually ruled in the districts in which they lived. The ruling class as a whole was loosely referred to by the Malays as raja-raja dan orang-orang besar (rulers and chieftains, or literally, great men). Other lesser figures of authority at the village level included the ulama (those who were learned in religion, such as imam (priests), khatib (readers or preachers in mosques), bilal (muezzins) and lebai (elders in charge of mosques)), and the pawang (magicians or shamen) and bomoh (medicine men), who wielded great influence over the orang-orang kampung (villagers). At the bottom of the Malay social structure were the common people described by the term ra'ayat (which stands both for an individual and for the subject class collectively) and the slaves. Ra'ayat owed blind loyalty and obedience to their local chiefs and possessed little knowledge of the world beyond his own and nearby kampung.

<sup>13</sup>William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1967), 67.





than a positive nation-building force. There was among the Malay ra'ayat "no consciousness of membership in a widespread Malay race and not much more consciousness of membership in a potential Malay nationality of the peninsula."<sup>14</sup> It was not until the early part of the 20th century that the common Muslim faith and the common racial identity became an active unifying agent among the Malays on a peninsular scale.

The reasons for the slow development of a Malay national consciousness were manifold. First, the Mohammedan monarchies in the peninsula had been dominated by what Almond and Verba call "a parochial-subject culture",<sup>15</sup> in which "the determining characteristic of the relationship between ra'ayat and ruling class was submission."<sup>16</sup> To the masses of the Malay peasantry, "government was the sole busi-

<sup>14</sup>Rupert Emerson, op. cit., 16-17. See also William R. Roff, op. cit., passim; T. H. Silcock and Ungku Aziz, "Nationalism in Malaya", in William L. Holland (ed.), Asian Nationalism and the West (New York: Macmillan Co., 1953), 269-345; and R. Onraet, C.M.G., "The Problems of Nationhood in British Malaya", Eastern World, July 1950, 9.

<sup>15</sup>Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1965), 22-24.

<sup>16</sup>William R. Roff, op. cit., 9. This submissive attitude was institutionalized as practical common sense in Malay custom, ritual, fables and legends. For example, it is embodied in such popular sayings as "Whoever becomes raja, I will touch my forehead", "To try to help someone who has incurred the wrath of a raja is like helping a cow catch a tiger", and "A commoner standing up against his superiors is like a soft cucumber fighting a prickly durian fruit."





ness of the Sultan and his chiefs. ... A commoner's duty was to carry out commands, or 'Titah', of the Sultan at all cost."<sup>17</sup> Oriented to submission to authority rather than to participation in the input structures, the Malay ra'ayat had little notion about their political roles. They had only some vague idea of seeing the local chief or ulama if problems affecting them arose. Therefore, no common political bond and common identity were perceived beyond their respective state boundaries. The continuing disunity and rivalries among the ruling classes in the peninsula also tended to reinforce the isolative and parochial attitudes of the Malay peasantry. Second, in an age of high illiteracy and poor communication facilities, for the Malay padi cultivators and villagers, the scope of their sense of identity was bound to be limited to their immediate surroundings only. Third, the physical limits of the Malay states were set by the inclination of the ruling class for territorial conquest and the power distribution in the peninsula. There was no conscious effort on the part of the ruling classes to build a peninsular empire based on the common identity of race, language, and religion. In fact, since the 15th century, any attempt at empire-building had been thwarted by European intervention.

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<sup>17</sup> Radin Soenarno, "Malay Nationalism, 1896-1941", Journal of Southeast Asian History, 1, 1 (March 1960), 1. See also Frank A. Swettenham, British Malaya, revised edition (London: Allen and Unwin, 1948), 141. Swettenham wrote: the Malay ra'ayat "had no initiative whatever: they were there to do what their chief told them - no more, no less."



Finally, after the introduction of the Residential System into the Malay states, the cardinal point of British policy had been to strengthen the authority and symbolic importance of the sultans and to preserve the traditional ways of life of the Malay masses. Any effort on the part of the British to form a larger political unit in the peninsula was determined by consideration of economic and administrative convenience and expediency rather than by a conscious concern for Malay nation-building.

Due to these interrelated factors, it was not until after the Second World War that state-building on a peninsular scale was actually attempted. This delay in the development of a common Malay state and nationality based on race, language, religion and ways of life proved to have far-reaching bearings on today's Malaysian politics. It would seem that the Malays would have established their legitimacy as the entire Malaysian nation had the process of Malay state- and nation-building not been thwarted before the non-Malay immigrants arrived en masse. However, this did not take place. Instead, a communal society with diverse group allegiance emerged with the permanent settlement of the Chinese and Indian immigrants in the peninsula. A peninsula-wide desire for a common Malay state and nation became assertive and displayed itself forcefully in an organized fashion only after the communal pattern of social groupings had taken root in Malaya.

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The result of this development was that a Malay movement which could have been regarded as a legitimate drive toward nation-building, had it emerged before the Malay community became simply one community among many equals, was now being seen in the eyes of the non-Malay groups as essentially a communal force for hegemony and domination.<sup>18</sup>

As will be seen shortly, British indirect rule in the peninsula had brought about centralization of power in the sultanates of the Malay states. From the standpoint of state-building at the level of the Malay states, the shift of the locus of authority and power from the territorial chiefs to the sultans and the British Residents was indeed an important step in political development; but in a wider context, this concentration of power proved to be a considerable barrier to the subsequent efforts at establishing a central authority in the peninsula as a whole.

On the British part, the Federated Malay States were formed in 1895 largely out of administrative convenience and economic considerations. The Federation took the form of bureaucratic centralization and was never seriously envisaged as a first step toward the eventual

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<sup>18</sup>The fact that the large majority of the Malay population in today's Malaysia still regard the country as being Malay rather than Malaysian and seek to build a Malay nation from the diverse communal groups indicates that Malay nationalist force is still on the march and the Malay community is still not prepared to accept its status as being one community among a number of equals. Such a drive is bound to come into conflict with the increasing identification of the non-Malay communities with Malaysia as a multiracial and multicultural country.



integration of all the Malay states in the peninsula into a single political unit. It was true that state particularism had discouraged the Unfederated Malay States from joining the federal arrangement;<sup>19</sup> but in the final analysis, it was the British who had considered the extension of the federal scheme to these states undesirable not only because of the geographical isolation, difficulties of access and lack of immediate economic potential in Kelantan and Trengganu, but also because their aims in these states could be achieved by means of a modified version of the Residential System without violating the desire of the Malay elites to enjoy a greater autonomy. However, when the federal scheme had developed to a point where British finance was adversely affected in the post-war slump in the 1920's and the great depression in the early 1930's, the British introduced a decentralization program in which considerable administrative autonomy was restored to the states and the powers of the sultans were increased.<sup>20</sup> In terms of political development, this was indeed a step backward in the process

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<sup>19</sup>William R. Roff points out that the UMS did not join the federation because "the Malay rulers showed a strong disinclination to see their states absorbed in the federal structure with the consequent loss of independence and authority that seemed likely" (*op. cit.*, 92). It should be noted that British readiness to compromise had not only reinforced state particularism but also led to the subsequent uneven rate of social and economic modernization between the west-coast and east-coast states.

<sup>20</sup>See Rennie Smith, "The Future of Malaya", *Pacific Affairs*, 6, 7 (August-September 1933), 394-398.



of state-building in the peninsula. Instead of forging ahead toward the establishment of a central authority and the weakening of the traditional centers of powers in the Malay states, the British had, through the decentralization scheme, greatly accentuated the parochial tendency of the Malay royalties and aristocratic elites, thus laying the foundation of the Malay states as a bulwark of Malay rights against the non-Malay communities and leading to the collapse of the centralization attempt of the 1946 Malayan Union scheme.

### The First Impact of British Rule

When the British expanded their control into the Malayan peninsula, the Malay state-society they found was essentially a feudal one in which a group of Malay territorial chiefs controlled their villages under the authority of a paramount ruler. In many cases, British penetration took place in the midst of a power struggle in the Malay states and the former came in as a protector of a sultan or a district chief who had appealed to the British for assistance and agreed to the terms of British protection.<sup>21</sup>

After British control had been legalized in a treaty with the Malay ruling class, the first task of the British was the restora-

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<sup>21</sup>For example, Perak, Selangor, the Minangkabau states of Negri Sembilan and Pahang were flooded with succession disputes or civil wars between district chiefs before the British stepped in as an arbiter or protector taking the side of those who agreed to accept British penetration. See Rupert Emerson, *op. cit.*, 122-193; and N. J. Ryan, *op. cit.*, 97-132.





tion of political order and "the creation of the conditions under which the [British] economy of the time could most profitably flourished."<sup>22</sup> The important group to be affected in this task was the Malay ruling class. The system of sultanate was rationalized and made predictable on the basis of a legal code according to which the sultan was turned from a chief among equals into a kind of constitutional monarch. Through the centralization of tax collection and the consolidation of the ruler as the ultimate dispenser of offices and revenues, the Malay territorial chiefs and aristocratic elites were made dependent upon the sultan and the British for political power and social mobility. By these measures, the source of power struggle and political instability was eliminated and the sultan's right to rule was validated by powerful British support. In addition, the allegiance of the Malay traditional elites and chiefs was also won over to the British by providing them an income (or, as it is now called, a political pension) commensurate with their previous rank and influence and by engaging them either in government or in some of the tasks of administration.<sup>23</sup> In short, there emerged in the Malay

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<sup>22</sup>Rupert Emerson, op. cit., 1.

<sup>23</sup>Generally, two kinds of political pension were paid: 1. pensions to those holding no office in the state but having a claim by reason of rank or past service; and 2. allowances to those holding titles or being given government appointments. The general policy was to let no one suffer a reduction of income as a result of the change. Actual



states a new order of power relationships in which the Malay chiefs and traditional elites became bureaucratized, so to speak, and the sultan, with the support of the British Resident, became the sole focus of state authority.

As part of the general policy of accommodation and utilization of the traditional elite, some special educational facilities were made available to the sons of the rulers and their chiefs. A number of places at government English schools in Perak, Selangor and the Straits Settlements were reserved for selected Malay boys of royal blood and high status. The state Lands and Survey Offices also provided some practical training in land administration for the elite group. In 1905, the British established the Malay College in Kuala Kangsar (the Malay Eton) with a declared objective to educate "Malays of good family" and to train them to fill subordinate posts in government services.<sup>24</sup> In the College, Malay "boys of gentle birth" were taught in English up to Standard VII and were drawn imitatively toward the manners and mores of the British.<sup>25</sup> A number of the Standard VII

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association with government and administration was also provided in two general ways: 1. participation in the State Council set up by the British, which involved only the rulers and the senior chiefs; and 2. appointments to administrative offices. See William R. Roff, op. cit., 15-24.

<sup>24</sup>R. J. Wilkinson's letter to the Resident-General, February 24, 1904; as quoted in William R. Roff, op. cit., 100. For a description of the Malay College, see ibid., 100-13 and passim; and H. Drennan, "A Short History of the Malay College", Malay College Magazine, 2, 5 (1955), 8-15.

<sup>25</sup>E. W. Birch, the Resident of Perak, reported in 1905: "As this school





graduates who were thought to possess administrative potential were nominated jointly by the four Residents and the Resident-General for admission to a further three-year program to qualify them for the Junior Cambridge Certificate and for appointments as Malay Assistants (Class III) to the Malay Administrative Service which was established in 1910 as a junior branch of the Malayan Civil Service.<sup>26</sup> Although it was decided in 1921 to liberalize the recruitment criteria, the British, in practice, confined appointments to the Malayan Civil Service "for the most part to members of the traditional elite."<sup>27</sup>

In response to the post-war slump and the ensuing financial crisis in the Federated Malay States and the increasing anxiety of the Malay ruling class concerning the growing numbers of non-Malays employed in the general clerical service and especially in the specialist services, the British established a Retrenchment Commission in February 1922 to examine the administrative and financial situation and to recommend ways and means to cut down expenditure on overseas staff and

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is exclusively for boys of gentle birth, all the surroundings should be substantial and attractive ... to become an undoubted success the school should be run on the lines of an English public school." See Annual Report on Perak for 1905, 12.

<sup>26</sup> A Junior Cambridge Certificate is approximately equivalent to a Junior High School Certificate in North America. A holder of such a certificate should usually take two-year matriculation courses in order to enter university. For a discussion of the Malay Administrative Service, see Robert O. Tilman, Bureaucratic Transition in Malaya (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1964), 102-120.

<sup>27</sup> William R. Roff, op. cit., 109.



to "restore" to the Malays a more active role in the affairs of their own states. Upon the recommendations of the Retrenchment Commission,<sup>28</sup> an avowedly pro-Malay preferential policy in recruitment to the lower grades of the government services was introduced in the early 1920's. The implementation of this policy was slow and gradual. In 1924, non-urban English schools were established and curriculum was adjusted to attract more Malay enrolments. A trade school was set up in Kuala Lumpur in 1929 to train Malay boys. In Taiping, Ipoh and Kuala Lumpur, Malay Appointment Committees were formed and all department heads of the government services were instructed to consult their local appointment committees before making any new recruitments. During the same period, promotion of Malays within the subordinate ranks of the government services and from the Malay Administrative Service to the Malayan Civil Service was improved and made easier. In pursuance of the pro-Malay policy, more non-Malays than Malays were affected by the large-

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<sup>28</sup>The Retrenchment Commission produced more than 50 Interim Reports and a final report in early 1923. It made the following recommendations: 1. absolute preference should be given to Malay candidates in future recruitment; 2. special training programs should be provided for the Malays; 3. foreign-born pupils should not be allowed admission to state-aid schools except local boys were not available; 4. all European officers should be required to have a real knowledge of Malay which should be made a condition of promotion; 5. a proportion of seven to three in government services in favor of the Malays should be the goal; and 6. English or Malay vernacular schools should be advised to provide lists of students with administrative ability and no appointments should be made outside the lists except for special reasons. These recommendations were received by the colonial government with great sympathy and many of them were embodied in the pro-Malay policy in the 1920's. See William R. Roff, op. cit., 114-118.





scale retrenchment resulting from the great depression in the early 1930's.<sup>29</sup> In short, the pro-Malay policy emerged as a sort of job insurance, emphasizing Malay rights as against those of the non-Malay communities. Its effects were multiple and far-reaching. One of these was the subsequent emergence in the 1930's of a group of English-educated Malay bureaucrats and intelligentsia, increasingly sensitive to, and conscious of, Malay economic and educational backwardness and the competitive claims of the non-Malays, but who saw their interest in cooperating with the Malay royalties and continuing their association with the British. An alliance among this group and the Malay aristocratic elites was to become the dominating political force in Malaya immediately after the Second World War.

On the other hand, Malay vernacular schools were also established by the British out of public funds, but their curriculum was designed to be only "sufficient for the ordinary requirements of Malay boys, who will become bullock-wagon drivers, padi growers, fisherman, etc..<sup>30</sup> The annual proportion of the FMS revenues spent on education

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<sup>29</sup>William R. Roff, op. cit., 203.

<sup>30</sup>"The System of Education in the F.M.S." in Special Reports on Educational Subjects, vol. 14 (Great Britain Parliamentary Papers, Cd. 2379, 1905), 9. D. T. Dussek, the principal of the Sultan Idris College (1922-1936) and Assistant Director of Education in charge of Malay schools (1925-1936), remarked that the Malay vernacular education was designed "to educate the rural population in a suitable rural manner and equip them to continue to live a useful, happy rural life" (Dussek's personal communication with William R. Roff, op. cit., 28). R. H. Kenion (an unofficial member of the Federal Council whose





was extremely small, usually less than one percent.<sup>31</sup> "This may be so", Sir Frank A. Swettenham (the first Resident-General of the FMS) argued in 1906,

but the results are not unsatisfactory, and the Government has never desired to give the children a smattering, or even a larger quantity, of knowledge, which will not help them to more useful and happy lives than they now lead. To the Malay the principal value of school attendance is to teach him habits of order, punctuality and obedience.<sup>32</sup>

It is thus clear that the Malay vernacular education system was devised

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view on the vernacular education was shared by the Residents of Perak and Pahang) stated in 1915: "The great object of education is to train a man to make his living. ... You can teach Malays so that they do not lose their skill and craft in fishing and jungle work. Teach them the dignity of manual labor, so that they do not all become kranies [clerks] and I am sure you will not have the trouble which has arisen in India through overeducation." Proceedings of the Federal Council of the F.M.S., 1915, B67. A similar view was expressed by Sir George Maxwell, the Director of Education, in 1920: "The aim of the Government is not to turn out a few well-educated youths, nor a number of less-educated boys; rather it is to improve the bulk of the people and to make the son of the fisherman or peasant a more intelligent fisherman or peasant than his father has been, and a man whose education will enable him to understand how his lot in life fits in with the scheme of life around him" (Annual Report on the F.M.S., 1920, 13). Therefore, the curriculum in Malay schools was planned to enable Malay boys "by the time they have passed the fourth standard to read or write the simple literature of their tongue either in Jawi or Roman character, to keep accounts if they become small shopkeepers, and to work simple problems in the money currency, weights and measurements of their country" ("The System of Education in the F.M.S.", ibid., 9). For a Malay reaction to these remarks, see Tuan Haji Hamdan bin Sheikh Tahir (Chief Education Adviser, Ministry of Education, Malaysia), "Development of Malay as a Medium of Instruction in Schools", Eastern Sun, October 19, 1967.

<sup>31</sup>See Perak Government Gazette, January 4, 1895.

<sup>32</sup>British Malaya, 1906 edition, op. cit., 258.



to contain the masses of the Malay peasantry to their traditional ways and the kampong environment. The goal of the British was not to "overeducate" the Malay ra'ayat.<sup>33</sup>

The British attitude toward the Malay vernacular education was one of the concrete expressions of their overall policy of non-interference in Malay religion, customs and way of life. Although this policy was justified on the ground that the British were treaty-bound to respect the traditional structure of the Malay society, the fundamental guideline of this policy was obviously based on considerations of political expediency. In order to maintain political stability and to create favorable conditions for rapid economic extraction, it was undoubtedly imperative for the British to leave the traditional Malay life as undisturbed as possible.<sup>34</sup> "Overeducation" of the Malays

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<sup>33</sup>Commenting on the fact that only one out of 2,900 Malay graduates of the state vernacular schools of Perak in 1903 found employment as a clerk, the Resident said: "It is very satisfactory to know that this system does not overeducate the boys ... [who] almost followed the avocations of their parents or relations, chiefly in agricultural pursuits" (E. W. Birch, "The Federated Malay States", United Empire, n.s., 3 (1912), 44). Emphasis added.

<sup>34</sup>The British learned a lesson from the murder by the Malays in 1875 of J. W. W. Birch (the first Resident of Perak) about the danger of violating their treaty obligation regarding respecting Malay religion, custom and ways of life. Birch's death was caused by his attempt to introduce more direct forms of British control in Perak in complete disregard of Malays' sentiment. In his report to Singapore, for example, he stated that "it concerns us little what were the old customs of the country [sic], nor do I think they are worthy





was undesirable not only because it might lead to qualitative changes in Malay outlooks but also because it might create a possible nationalist movement or a group of malcontents who would challenge the British new order. This the British desired to avoid.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, for the same consideration, it was equally important for the British to secure a mutually profitable alliance with the Malay rulers and their establishments. The importance of Malay elite cooperation lay in the fact that the close association of the Malay rulers and their chiefs with British rule satisfied the myth of continued Malay

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of any consideration" (as quoted in Sir R. O. Winstedt, History of Malaya (Singapore: Royal Asiatic Society, 1935), 237). The murder led to the Perak War, resulting in the hanging of a number of Malay chiefs and the exile of Sultan Abdullah, the Mentri of Larut and two other senior chiefs. For an account of the incident, see Sir R. O. Winstedt and R. J. Wilkinson, "A History of Perak", Journal of Royal Asiatic Society (Malayan Branch), vol. 12, pt. 1 (June 1934), 102ff; and Rupert Emerson, op. cit. 125ff. The effect of the Perak War was far-reaching both for the British and for the Malay traditional elites throughout the peninsula. For the former, it was realized that direct British rule would have transformed the Malay rajas and chiefs "into our [the British] unforgiving enemies" (see Lady Alice Lovat, Life of Sir Frederick Weld (London: 1914), xiv), while, for the latter, it was learned that it was futile to resist British control.

<sup>35</sup>This was implied in a statement on vernacular education made by Sir Laurence Guillemard (British High Commissioner) in 1920: "It is no real education that qualifies a pupil in reading, writing and arithmetic and leave him with a distaste, or perhaps even a contempt, for the honourable pursuits of husbandry and handicraft. It will not only be a disaster to, but a violation of the whole spirit and traditions of, the Malay race if the result of our vernacular education is to lure the whole of the youth from the kampong to the town." Proceedings of the Federal Council of the F.M.S., 1920, B65.



sovereignty in the Malay states.<sup>36</sup> Although a new class of colonial servants whose power, status and material comfort depended upon British support and control had been created out of the Malay aristocratic elites, the traditional Malay social structure persisted in its main outline within a new framework in which some of the former personal links between the aristocracy and the ra'ayat had been transmuted into bureaucratic relationships. In addition, through the device of indirect rule, the contact of the orang-orang kampong with British administration was reduced to a minimum.<sup>37</sup> As the Malay masses rated

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<sup>36</sup>Right from the beginning, British policy had given priority to bringing the native aristocracy to a close association with colonial rule. In 1888, the Governor of the Straits Settlements (Sir Frederick Weld) remarked: "Nothing that we have done so far has taught them [Malay rulers and chiefs] to govern themselves, we are merely teaching them to co-operate with us and to govern under our guidance" (see Lady Alice Lovat, op. cit., 312). In 1893, in a Governor's despatch to the British Colonial Office, it was stated that "to unify and classify the government service of these states, great care must be taken to leave full scope for the employment of natives, especially of the native aristocracy" (as quoted in William R. Roff, op. cit., 21, note 53). Writing on the same issue, Sir Frank A. Swettenham said in 1899: "The Rulers and their chiefs do not feel that they have been set aside or ignored: indeed, as a matter of fact, there are a good many more Malays holding high office of State than there were in 1874. It is not only an honour and distinction to be nominated to such office, but besides a title, it gives the holder a sense of power, of having a part in the government of the country, and that is a Malay's highest ambition" (The Real Malay (London: 1900), 49).

<sup>37</sup>One form of indirect rule was to assign Malay officers to take charge of the daily affairs of the rural Malays. As one officer in the legal service of the Malayan Civil Service pointed out, "In districts where the Malay population largely preponderates, the District Officer, who is the chief executive officer of the Government in the district, may





blind loyalty to their rulers and chiefs above all else, the success of indirect rule not only insured political stability, but also greatly reinforced the parochial outlook of the Malay subject class.

As the need of the British to acquire the cooperation of the Malay ruling class did not require any serious intrusion into the ways of life of the rural Malays, the vast majority of the Malay ra'ayat had been allowed and encouraged to continue living according to their traditional ways. As seen earlier, the vernacular school system was formulated as an instrument "to breed a vigorous and self-respecting agricultural peasantry"<sup>38</sup> and to teach the Malays "habits of order, punctuality and obedience". Furthermore, the creation in 1913 of Malay land reservations in the Federated Malay States, Johore, and Kedah also tended to keep the Malays on the land and to insulate them from too immediate a contact with the new forces that were at work in the peninsula. Through the Rice Lands Enactment of 1917 which prohibited the cultivation of products other than rice in the Malay-held lands, the growing trend during the 1910's of a group of rural Malays to

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delegate some of his functions to a Malay Assistant Officer or Malay penghulu (headman) and some of these officers have been trained to take a very useful part in district administration. But in the numerous districts where mining and planting by foreigners, e.g., British and Chinese, are carried on, and where thousands of Chinese or Indian labourers are employed, the penghulu's activities are restricted, and matters of administrative detail affecting these people must be handled by the District Officer himself" (J. R. Innes, "The Protectorate System in the Malay States", National Review, 78 (November 1921), 400-401.

<sup>38</sup> British High Commissioner's annual address. Proceedings of the Federal Council of the F.M.S., 1920, B65.





engage in the more profitable small-holding rubber plantations was checked.<sup>39</sup> Government and missionary English schools were established but most of them were situated in the urban areas and this placed the instruction in English almost beyond the reach of the orang-orang kampung. Besides, because of their Christian orientation, these schools attracted very few Malay enrolments and tended to cater principally to the interests of the small Malay elite group and the non-Malay communities in towns and cities.<sup>40</sup> In the Unfederated Malay States, the situation was more or less the same. As a matter of fact, British indirect rule was more strictly observed in these states since they had enjoyed a greater autonomy in their internal affairs.

<sup>39</sup>The Malay Reservations Enactment of 1913 set aside certain areas of primarily rice land for exclusive Malay ownership and restricted the ability of the Malay to mortgage or lease his land. The immediate objective of the Enactment was to prevent Malays from succumbing to the lure of high prices of usable land caused by the rapid growth of the rubber enterprise. The Rice Lands Enactment was passed as a response to rice shortage toward the end of the First World War. See William R. Roff, op. cit., 122-124.

<sup>40</sup>Besides the problems of school location and religion, rural Malay pupils found it difficult to adjust to urban life and from one medium of instruction to another. There was also the age problem. Since only standard IV (standard III after 1924) graduates of the Malay vernacular schools were to be admitted to the English schools, they were usually 4 or 5 years older than their urban counterparts. According to the 1901 census, the total population of Kuala Lumpur and Taiping was 32,381 and 13,331 respectively, while Malay population in these two cities numbered only 3,727 and 727. Although scholarships for Malays were provided, rural Malay boys were rarely attracted. See William R. Roff, op. cit., 29-30. See also Tuan Haji Hamdan bin Sheikh Tahir, op. cit..



Another important reason why the British had been able to follow with considerable success a policy of non-interference in the Malay traditional way of life was the fact that unlimited supplies of cheap labor from South China and India were readily available for the rapid and effective exploitation and expansion of the mineral and agricultural resources of the peninsula. From the standpoint of political expediency and economic efficiency, the British could hardly see any need to oblige the allegedly "lazy and shiftless" Malays<sup>41</sup> to share in the difficult task of developing the country's economy by conquering the thick forests and jungles. The result was that in an age of rapid and far-reaching changes "Malay life was left behind like a prahu [small boat] in the wake of an ocean liner, rocking slightly but otherwise left to pursue its own way."<sup>42</sup>

It is thus clear that the early years of British indirect rule had greatly reinforced the tendency of the Malay ra'ayat toward an isolation in an environment of their traditional ways. Essentially, political development in the peninsula had taken the form of bureaucratic centralization, which concerned mainly the Malay ruling class, and of building a modern extractive economy, which involved largely

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<sup>41</sup>Rupert Emerson, op. cit., 18. See also supra, Chapter II, note 34. Sir George Leith, the Lieutenant-Governor of Penang, described the Penang Chinese as "one of the most numerous and useful classes of the Inhabitants", while he referred to the Malays as "an indolent, vindictive, and treacherous People" whose number, he said, was "fortunately very small" (as quoted in Rupert Emerson, op. cit., 74, note 11).

<sup>42</sup>William R. Roff, op. cit., 13.





the Chinese and the Indian immigrants. As a result, mobilization and exposure to modernity had been confined to the small group of the Malay aristocratic and English-educated elites and a large section of the non-Malay immigrant communities. State-building in the Malay states was not brought about by the interactions of internal forces but was initiated by an outside power and according to its own best interests. The process of state-building was also not accompanied by an effort at nation-building. On the contrary, due to the success of indirect rule, state particularism and Malay kampong-oriented outlook were greatly encouraged and accentuated. While a large number of Chinese and Indian immigrants had been brought into the country, most of them had been kept from a face-to-face contact with the Malays due to settlement separation, occupational specialization, and language and religious differences. The Malay masses had never been socialized either in their schools or in their social environment to accept the non-Malays as their fellow countrymen. Moreover, unlike some other nations where the commercialization of the economy and the urbanization of the population usually gave birth to a new class of wealthy villagers, merchants and a group of certificate holders who might rise to challenge the authority and position of the traditional elites and foreign rule, the vast majority of the Malay ra'ayat were, for the most part, exempted from the direct impact of technological and economic changes

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as most of the modern and urban roles had been occupied by the non-Malay immigrants who had been regarded as "aliens".

What has been said should not, however, be taken to mean that British rule did not produce any significant effects on the Malay society. As a matter of fact, it was the changes brought about by the British that had set the stage for Malay communalism or bumi-putraism<sup>43</sup> (or nationalism, as those who failed to recognize the tendency toward permanent settlement of the non-Malay immigrants and the fact that the vast majority of the Malay population arrived the peninsula approximately at the same time as the non-Malays, would like to call it) to emerge from the mid-1920's onward and to develop its momentum immediately after the Japanese surrender.

#### British Rule and Malay Communalism

Among the changes brought about by British rule, one which had the decisive impact in stimulating the growth of Malay communalism was the startling increase in Chinese and Indian immigrants during the last quarter of the 19th century and the first three decades of the 20th century. By the turn of the century, these aliens had outnumbered the native Malays not only in the Straits Settlements but also in Perak,

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<sup>43</sup>Supra, 118-127, 145-146. Today, very few students of Malaysian politics have referred to the Malay drive for supremacy as "nationalism", although most of the Malay elites are still not prepared to accept the fact that the Malay community has now fallen from the status of a nation (if it had ever been one) to that of a mere community among a number of equals.





Selangor, and Negri Sembilan,<sup>44</sup> and began to dominate all aspects of the extractive and distributive economy, ranging from tin-mining, rubber plantation, shopkeepers and employers in the urban centers and retail middlemen in the rural areas. The development of a modern economy had brought into being a complex legal and economic system which was unrelated to the traditional Malay society. It had also stimulated the growth of a network of transport and communication which, plus the centralization of decision-making, gave the first experience of a social and economic unity and of an uniformity of purpose and practice to the peninsula in its history. These changes had led to the rapid emergence of urban centers which, dominated by non-Malay life and culture, appeared to the vast majority of the Malays as alien and strange. Furthermore, up to the end of the 1920's, English-educated Indians and Chinese had outnumbered Malay employees in the specialist and technical services and all the lower grades of the General Clerical Service.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>The total population of Perak, Selangor and Negri Sembilan in 1911 was 918,291. The communal breakdowns were 408,957 Chinese, 165,844 Indian, and 333,731 Malay. Census of the Federated Malay States, 1911, 21.

<sup>45</sup>In 1920, only 10.5 percent of the 1,001 clerks of all grades in the General Clerical Service of the Federated Malay States were Malay (see H. R. Cheeseman, "Education in Malaya, 1900-1941", Malayan Historical Journal, 2 (July 1955), 33). In 1924, after the pro-Malay policy was adopted, among the 5,500 subordinate officers in the railway, postal, and medical departments, fewer than 1,500 were local-born and among these, the Malays were a small group. See William R. Roff, op. cit., 113-114.





Although most of the non-Malay immigrants were of a transient nature, there had been a growing tendency during the second and third decade of this century among an increasing number of them toward permanent settlement in the Straits Settlements and the mainland peninsula.<sup>46</sup> By the mid-1920's when the decentralization controversies arose, more and more local-born non-Malays (especially the English-educated Straits Chinese) voiced demands for equal rights and equal treatment. At the same time, Malay demands for special rights became increasingly vocal and the response of the Malay elites to the Chinese appeal for equality was hostile and antagonistic.

The first response of the Malay community to the so-called "alien domination" came from the Kaum Muda (Young Faction), a group of Arabic-educated Malay intelligentsia (principally Malay-Arabs and Sumatrans) who had drawn their inspirations from the Islamic renaissance movement in the Middle East through their sojourns in Cairo and the Hejaz at the turn of the century. They returned to the Straits

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<sup>46</sup> Between 1911 and 1921, despite the fact that a million and a half Chinese arrived in Malaya and almost a million returned to China, the proportion of the community resident in the F.M.S. and born either there or elsewhere in the peninsula increased from 8% to 17% (Census of British Malaya, 1921, 93). By the end of the 1920's, this figure reached 29% plus those uncounted. The sex ratio of the Chinese also improved from fewer than 2 women to every 10 men in 1911 to nearly 5 to 10 in 1931 (British Malaya: A Report on the 1931 Census, 69, 50). Moreover, many Chinese were urban shopkeepers, businessmen and clerical workers whose financial and other stakes in the country tended to change their transient nature. The British policy-makers, however, failed to recognize these changes and continued to adhere to a strict distinction between the natives and the aliens.



Settlements and the peninsula with a burning desire to renovate Islam and make it a mobilizing force for social and economic changes and an adequate tool to meet the challenges posed by foreign domination. To this group of religious reformers, the basic factor which caused the gradual decay of the importance of the Malay race in the modern world was that the true spirit of Islam had been adulterated by impurities of custom and beliefs derived from adat (customary law, ceremonial procedures, behavior norms between individuals or classes, etc.) and from other religions, which were inimical to Malay progress. Therefore, the Kaum Muda called for a return to the purity of the original Islam. To achieve this, Malay-Muslim faith should be purified of all its imperfect elements, which had hindered the progress and social equality of all Muslims before Allah. They attacked the religious establishment and, in particular, the ulama (those learned in religion)<sup>47</sup> who were alleged to have transmitted a distorted image of

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<sup>47</sup>The following statement was typical of their attack on the religious establishment: "To become a Government Mufti [the senior religious functionary] in Malaya is a great glory. You have an official uniform, with a whole banana-comb of epaulettes on the shoulder, a jubbah [robe] embroidered with gold thread, a silk turban, and your own car. The ra'ayat fear and obey you, eat the scraps from your table, your spat out sireh [betel-vine]. And if you want to get married ... Bismillah [thanks to God]!". See Hamka (Haji Abdul Malek bin Karim Amrullah), Ajahku: Riwayat Hidup Dr. Abd. Karim Amrullah dan Perjuangan Kaum Agama (My Father: The Life of Dr. Abd. Karim Amrullah and the Religious Struggle), (Djakarta: 1950), 59. For an excellent account of the Kaum Muda movement, see William R. Roff, op. cit., 56-90, which is a revised version from his "Kaum Muda-Kaum Tua: Innovation and Reaction Amongst the Malays, 1900-1941", in K. G. Tregonning (ed.), Papers on Malayan History (Singapore: Malaya





the Muslim faith, and urged the rulers and the traditional leaders to form associations to foster education, economic development and self-awareness of the Malay masses. They also held that only the Kuran and hadith (sayings of the Prophet) alone, not the law books of the religious establishment, had the binding authority on the Malays. Although the Kaum Muda movement was mainly religious in character, by questioning the authority of the religious status quo and, obliquely, that of the traditional ruling class, it brought itself into a direct confrontation with the powerful and well-entrenched elements in traditional Malay society.<sup>48</sup>

The reform drive of the Kaum Muda failed to become a mass movement for two important reasons. On the one hand, it was strongly resisted by the Kaum Tua (Old Faction), a combined force of the traditional ulama and the Malay ruling class, which branded Kaum Muda's followers as radicals and communists and imposed restrictions on their

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Publishing House, Ltd., 1962), 162-192; and also Radin Soenarno, op. cit., 5-9; and Gordon P. Means, "The Role of Islam in the Political Development of Malaysia", Comparative Politics, 1, 2 (January 1969), 271-274.

<sup>48</sup> As seen earlier, the authority of the Malay rulers was greatly strengthened as a result of British rule. This was particularly true in the reserved field of religious affairs and Malay custom. Being stripped of most of the real power in politics, it was natural for the rulers to turn to this field to express their authority. This led to a concentration of doctrinal and administrative religious authority in the hands of a hierarchy of officials directly dependent on the rulers for their positions and power. As a consequence, the fortune of the religious establishment was closely tied to that of the ruling class.



reformist activities and the circulation of their literature. On the other hand, the Kaum Muda failed to penetrate into the rural Malay masses. At that time, the majority of the Malay ra'ayat still owed their unquestioned loyalty to the traditional establishment (both religious and secular), looking to it for protection and guidance rather than trying to adapt their life to the changing environment. However, the politicization and wide publicity in the first three decades of this century of the controversies raised by the Kaum Muda<sup>49</sup> had produced certain effects on the outlook of the Malay community by creating an impulse for change and reform among the reformist adherents. The followers of the Kaum Muda were frequently instrumental in promoting discussions of new issues affecting Malay life (saving, wedding ceremony, etc.) apart from their main religious concerns.

Although the reformist fires of the Kaum Muda tended to die out toward the end of the 1920's, the Persaudaraan Sahabat Pena Malaya (The Brotherhood of Friends of the Pen of Malaya) organized by the Saudara (a newspaper controlled by the Malay-Arab reformists in Penang) in 1935 emerged as the first Malay organization of a peninsula-wide nature. Branches rapidly spread to all parts of the Malay states and

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<sup>49</sup> Kaum Muda's campaign was carried out through the religious teachers in the madrasah schools (as opposed to the traditional pondok schools) and the publication of such Kaum Muda newspapers as the Al-Iman (1906-1908), Neracha (1911-1915), Warta Malaya (1930-1941), Al-Ikhwan (1926-1931) and Saudara (1926-1941).





the Straits Settlements, and by 1939 the total membership of the Brotherhood (now expanded to include female members) reached its peak of 12,000. Through this organization and its activities both at the national and the branch level, Malays with different background were brought together through correspondence and meetings to discuss common problems and common solutions. Cooperation, unity "to prevent right being stolen by other races, who claim to be Malayan",<sup>50</sup> economic improvement, and loyalty to the Malay language and race, were emphasized in the activities of the organization. For the first time, the Sahabat Pena movement created the slogan: "Hidup Bahasa! Hiduplah Bangsa! (Long Live the Language! Long Live the Race!). This slogan laid down the basic theme of Malay communalism in the post-war years.

The Kaum Muda movement had also generated among the Malays a growing consciousness of their common religious and racial identity based on pan-Islamic doctrines and the idea of Melayu Raya. The source of inspiration for this awareness came not only from the Kaum Muda dispute at home but also from a group of Malay and Indonesian students studying in Mecca and Cairo. Influenced by the nationalist movements in the Middle East and the Netherlands East Indies, they formed the first Malay-Indonesian students' association at Al-Azhar in 1925 and

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<sup>50</sup> Saudara, September 15, 1934. For an account of the organization, see William R. Roff, op. cit., 212-221; and T. H. Silcock and Ungku Aziz, op. cit., 285ff.





started publishing between 1925-1926 two monthly journals (the Seruan Azhar and the Pilehan Timour) "to bring radiance and light to [their] homeland."<sup>51</sup> While these publications (banned in Dutch Indonesia but permitted free entry into Malaya) were primarily concerned with religious reforms, they centered around three main concepts - Pan-Islamism, Pan-Malayism (i.e., Melayu Raya or Malaya-Indonesia union) and anticolonial nationalism. Although these ideas seemed, at the time, to be too advanced for the general Malay public, they found enthusiastic adherents among the vernacular-educated Malay elites and religious teachers at scattered points of the peninsula and subsequently became the ideological premise of radical Malay communalism.

While the expansion of English education had produced a group of high status Malay administrators and subordinate government servants whose fortunes were tied closely to those of the colonial ruler, the spread of Malay vernacular education (despite the continuing rural bias of its curriculum) had given birth to the nucleus of a politically more radical "autochthonous intelligentsia", consisting primarily of Malay teachers and journalists.<sup>52</sup> The radical Malays

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<sup>51</sup> See William R. Roff, op. cit., 88. See also Dieter Krause, "Malaysia: Her National Unity and the Pan-Indonesian Movement", Asian Studies, 4, 2 (August 1966), 281-290. For an analysis of the early stage of the Pan-Islamic movement, see Anthony Reid, "Nineteenth Century Pan-Islam in Indonesia and Malaysia", Journal of Asian Studies, 26, 2 (February 1967), 267-283.

<sup>52</sup> An excellent account of the expansion of Malay vernacular education and the growth of the autochthonous intelligentsia can be found in William R. Roff, op. cit., 126-177.



were mainly the products of the Sultan Idris Training College at Tanjong Malin, founded in 1922 and designed to produce teachers for the Malay-language four-year schools. In this training institution, non-aristocratic Malay boys from all over the peninsula and the Straits Settlements were subjected to a common and unifying experience in which common Malayness rather than state groupings or identifications was emphasized and students' pride in their language and culture was stimulated. Furthermore, the 1920's were years of political change during which a British pro-Malay policy had taken shape and the decentralization controversies and the overt expression of discontent by the local-born Chinese had stirred up widespread discussions in the Malay vernacular press and stimulated the rapid growth of Malay voluntary associations committed to the promotion of Malay general welfare, economic progress and cultural advancement. In the west coast states, more and more Malays were drawn into increasing dependence on a cash economy, and the post-war slump in the early 1920's and the great depression of the early 1930's did much to arouse Malays' awareness of alien economic and social pressure. During the same period, the Indonesian nationalist movement flourished and the students and teachers at the Sultan Idris Training College were exposed to the influence of Indonesian revolutionary literature, in addition to that of the Seruan Azhar and Pilehan Timour published by Malay and Indonesian

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students in the Middle East. With the failure of the Indonesian revolt against the Dutch in 1926, a number of the Communist leaders sought refuge in Malaya and were provided shelter by their Malay sympathizers. These refugees established contact with some of the students and teachers at Tanjong Malim and began to preach their political doctrines and spread the idea of revolt against the established feudal society and the concept of a Melayu Raya among the Malays. In 1927, when the Partai Nasional Indonesia (National Party of Indonesia) was formed by Sukarno, some students at the College joined the movement and subscribed to the party newspaper, Fikiran Ra'ayat (People's Thought).<sup>53</sup> It was against this background that the radical and pro-Indonesian autochthonous intelligentsia was to emerge as a political force in the Malayan peninsula.

Most of the graduates of the Sultan Idris Training College returned to their respective home states to teach in the kampong, taking with them their awareness of belonging to a pan-Malay race rather than to a particular sultanate and an anti-colonial and anti-alien sentiment. As teachers in the traditional society enjoyed great authority and respect,<sup>54</sup> these young graduates became not only an impor-

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<sup>53</sup>See Radin Scenarno, op. cit., 16-17; William R. Roff, The Origins ..., op. cit., 221-225; and T. H. Silcock and Ungku Aziz, op. cit., 284ff.

<sup>54</sup>For a recent survey in a Malay kampong, see Kenneth Orr, "The Image of the Teacher in a Malay Kampong", Malaysian Journal of Education, 6, 1 (June 1969), 92-102.



tant unifying force of the Malay race but also, in a number of cases, a revolutionary agent as well. They were mobilized, but due to low wages, an inadequate educational system and poor facilities, they were frustrated men, envying the more privileged Malays and the wealthy non-Malay immigrants. This frustration had greatly accentuated their anti-colonial and anti-alien orientations. Meanwhile, some graduates of the Sultan Idris Training College who were determined "to write, and to help [their] people raise their standard of living"<sup>55</sup> became journalists and writers contributing free-lance articles to the vernacular press and writing social or satirical novels with a view to awakening and channeling social and political awareness of the Malays. In short, the sense of identification of this group of vernacular-educated Malay elites with their fellow-Malays was high, and their political outlook was pro-Indonesian, anti-colonial, hostile to the alien immigrants, opposing to the "bourgeois-feudalist" leadership of the Malay ruling class, and vaguely Marxist.

It is thus clear that toward the end of the 1920's there emerged in the Malay society three contending elite groups - the largely Malay-educated autochthonous intelligentsia, the Arabic-educated religious reformists, and the English-educated bureaucrats and elites.

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<sup>55</sup>Harun bin Mohamed Amin's remarks. See William R. Roff, The Origin ..., op. cit., 155. Harun is a well-known novelist graduated from the Sultan Idris Training College.





While they were differentiated with respect to their educational background, they were also divided in their attitudes toward the Malay rulers, British rule, and the non-Malay immigrant population. The radical Malay-educated intelligentsia attacked all three targets, giving special emphasis to anti-colonialism. By virtue of their strong commitment to Pan-Malayism, they were racially pro-Malay and anti-alien. The religious reformists placed the blame for Malay backwardness on the religious establishment and, by implication, on the Malay rulers as well. Committed to Pan-Islamism, they also stood for Melayu Raya. The English-educated Malay bureaucrats and elites and the vast majority of the Malay ra'ayat, on the other hand, sided firmly with their rulers and aristocratic elites. Influenced by their English education and their dependence upon the colonial establishment for political power and social status, this group of Malay elites was strongly pro-British and only vaguely pro-Indonesian and Pan-Islamic. They resented the presence of the non-Malay immigrants and demanded that the British provide special protection and assistance to the Malay community. Despite their differences, the three elite groups had, nevertheless, one thing in common: their sense of Malay identity was high and their political aim was "Malaya for the Malays." Due to the general conservatism and political apathy of the Malay peasantry and their attack on the traditional elites and the rulers, the Malay

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leftists and the religious reformists failed to win popular support in the Malay society, although they had done much to stir up Malays' racial and religious consciousness. Finally, it was the English-educated bureaucrats who, with their superior organizational skills and resources, and their alliance with the royalties and the traditional elites, were to emerge as the dominating political force and to set the pattern for Malay communalism from the late 1930's onward.

Before dealing with the growth of Malay political organizations, one should, perhaps, mention the important role played by the Malay vernacular press and non-political associations in the shaping of the pattern of Malay communalism and communal relations. Besides the various religious reform newspapers and journals whose influence has been mentioned, during the third decade of the century, 34 new vernacular newspapers and periodicals started publication in the peninsula in addition to those published in Singapore.<sup>56</sup> One reason for this increase was the widespread growth in the 1920's of Malay clubs and societies around the towns and in the large kampong led by English-educated government servants, vernacular or religious schoolteachers or Islamically oriented small merchants and businessmen. These Malay

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<sup>56</sup> See William R. Roff, The Origins ..., op. cit., 157-177; idem, Guide to Malay Periodicals, 1876-1941, with Details of Known Holdings in Malaya (Singapore: Eastern University Press, 1961); idem, Sejarah Surat2 Khabar Melayu (History of Malay Newspaper), (Singapura: Saudara Sinaran Berhad, 1967); and Nik Ahmad bin Nik Hassan, "The Malay Vernacular Press", Latihan Ilmiah, Universiti Malaya di-Singapura, 1958.



associations were purely social, cultural or economic in character as most of them were literary, welfare and progress societies. Concerned with creating a new and better society, they all recognized without exception "the larger Malay society of which they were a part and spoke in holistic (if not necessarily nationalistic) terms of the task of improving the educational and economic status of the Malays."<sup>57</sup> Besides regular discussions and meetings, many of these associations also engaged in publishing small periodicals. Although these publications were mostly short-lived, they not only reflected but also stimulated the growing new Malay self-consciousness. All Malay voluntary associations, newspapers and periodicals, when they were first started, took great care to disclaim publicly any desire to meddle in politics.<sup>58</sup> This self-imposed limitation or censorship, however, did not preclude their adoption of a communal stand and making comments on the government where its Malay policy was involved. As a matter of fact, all Malay press was hostile toward Chinese and Indian demands for equal

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<sup>57</sup>William R. Roff, The Origins ..., op. cit., 185.

<sup>58</sup>The following statement was typical: "One of the cries we hear is about politics. We are surprised that Malays should want to waste their time on such profitless matters. We all know that Malaya is ruled by the English, who are clever and experienced at this sort of thing. Their government is very fair, and within their strength and justice we can live indefinitely until life is peaceful and safe. What more do we want? Are we cleverer than the English? What is more, forbidden politics is a dangerous game, for all it causes is trouble. For these reasons, talk about politics is just not wanted in this country." Tanah Melayu (1934), as quoted in William R. Roff, The Origins ..., op. cit., 187-188, note 27.





rights and status. One of the typical arguments in the Malay press against giving equal treatment to the non-Malays was that when masons were well paid for building a house, they were not thereby entitled to a share in its ownership.<sup>59</sup> In response to the claim of a Chinese Legislative Councillor of the Straits Settlements that Malaya belonged not only to the Malays but to the Chinese as well, the Majallah Guru (Teacher's Magazine) wrote: "This is a presumption that must not be tolerated. Can we Malays if born in Shanghai call ourselves the sons of the soil of Shanghai, just because we want rights and privileges?"<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> See The Modern Light (a monthly journal addressed primarily to the English-educated Malays), 1 (December 1940), 354. This was a very frequently expressed Malay view from the early 1930's right up to the outbreak of the War.

<sup>60</sup> Majallah Guru, editorial, August 1931. The magazine was published jointly by all the Malay Teachers' Associations in the peninsula and the Straits Settlements. The Chinese Legislative Councillor involved was Mr. Lim Ching Yan, who asked: "Who said this is a Malay country? ... Our forefathers came here and worked hard as coolies .... They married and spent their money here, and in this way the Government was able to open up the country from jungle to civilization. We have become inseparable from this country. It is ours, our country ...". See Al-Ikwan, 5 (February 1931), 182. In the 1930's, to the discomfort of the Malay press, a number of well-known English writers had written of their fear about the growing power of the Chinese in Malaya. For example, Arnold J. Toynbee wrote: "The race for wealth and power remains between the British and the Chinese. The prize will fall to those who can stand the climate and other geographical conditions of the country. But I have not the slightest doubt of the conclusion of this peaceful race: the Chinese will win. ... A truly significant mark that the British Empire can leave in Malaya when she withdraws, is the transformation of this country into the Nineteenth Province of China" (quoted in Majallah Guru, March 1930, 47-48). D. C. Somerville, another British writer, also remarked: "Perhaps the days of the Malays are over, but their end does not come from us. It comes from their more industrious fellow Asiatics, the Chinese. What we can do



The first Malay political organization, the Kesatuan Melayu Singapura (Singapore Malay Union), was formed in Singapore in 1926. Branches were later established in Penang and Malacca in 1937. Between 1938 and 1939, Pahang, Selangor, Negri Sembilan, and Province Wellesley had followed the example of Singapore and set up their own Malay associations. In August 1939, a national congress of these associations was held in Kuala Lumpur "to seek ways of furthering and strengthening the efforts of the Malay race and the Malay associations."<sup>61</sup> In the following year, similar Malay associations were established in Johore, Kelantan and Perak as well as in Sarawak and Brunei. A second congress of the Malay associations was convened in Singapore on December 25-26, 1940. Although a third congress was planned for Ipoh a year later, it was not held due to the impending Japanese invasion.

A number of general observations can be made concerning these Malay associations. First, they were exclusively communal not only in terms of their membership but also in terms of their declared objectives.<sup>62</sup> Second, they were elite rather than mass organizations,

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to elevate them has already been done" (quoted in Majallah Guru, June 1931, 42). These utterances, like a spark falling on a powder cache, provoked widespread angry protests and denunciations both in the Malay press and the Legislative Councils. As a result, Malay resentment against the non-Malay immigrants was deepened with both fear and anger.

<sup>61</sup> Majlis, August 7, 1939.

<sup>62</sup> Generally, the Malay associations sought to achieve the following objectives: to encourage members to play a greater role in public





mainly concerned with articulating the interests of the elite group, especially those of its English-educated and aristocratic component, although they also took it upon themselves to articulate the interests of the Malay masses, acting as self-appointed spokesmen of the neglected interests of the ra'ayat. Third, they were royalist and strongly pro-British, looking to the colonial government for special treatment and privileges as against the non-Malay immigrant groups.<sup>63</sup> Fourth,

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and governmental affairs; to sponsor Malay progress and interest in politics and education; to make representations to the government on behalf of the Malay community in all matters concerning the rights, privileges and freedom of the Malays; and to foster higher and technical education with a view to stimulating Malay children to obtain new skills. In short, the growth of the Malay associations was a response to the widespread anxiety expressed in the Malay vernacular press, the progress associations and in other ways about their fears that Malay interests might be submerged beneath those of the Chinese and other aliens.

<sup>63</sup>"Regardless of what others may think of their position", Abdul Majid bin Zainuddin, a high-ranking English-educated Malay officer, wrote in 1928, the Malays "are quite satisfied with present arrangements, as they know full well that if they get rid of the British, they will be worse off under some other power who would be sure to overrun the country and trample down the Malays the moment they are by themselves. It is dangerous for fatherless young chickens like ourselves, they would say, to move about alone where there are hawks and eagles hovering about ready to pounce upon them" (One of Them (identified as being Abdul Majid bin Zainuddin), The Malays of Malaya (Singapore: 1928), 94-95). Similar satisfaction was shown by other Malay leaders. For example, the Raja Muda of Perak told the British at a dinner in London in 1930: "I think the present form of government is really the best for the country and its people. I will not say it is perfect; but if it is not, it is trying hard to be so, and I hope it will become perfect in due course. At the present moment every body is content and happy." (See British Malaya, June 1930). While these statements were typical of the pro-British attitude of the English-educated Malay elites, it also showed the sense of their political incompetence in the face of superior British abilities. All Malay associations





they distinguished themselves from earlier Malay progress and friendship societies by their political commitment and the close association of their leadership with the Malay royalties and the government bureaucracy. In the Malay states, the royal and traditional elites had played an important role not only in the formation of these Malay associations but also in leading them.<sup>64</sup> Finally, although, by 1940, these Malay associations failed to establish the proposed Persekutuan Persatuan2 Melayu Semenanjung Tanah Melayu (Union of the Malay Associations of the Malay Lands of the Peninsula) due to state rivalries and particularism, the movement was not without its success and significance for the development of Malay communalism a few years later. It had provided, as William R. Roff points out, "the only acceptable framework" for Malay political action immediately after the War.<sup>65</sup>

The 1930's saw Malay political attitudes moving from the economic and social concerns to the political stage. There was no

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took care to proclaim their loyalty to the British government. The Singapore Malay Union was well-known in sponsoring welcome and farewell parties for new and retiring British governors and high officers. By the end of the 1930's, all Malay associations were enthusiastically engaged in raising funds to buy war planes for British war effort in Europe. In short, as Robert O. Tilman points out, "the Malays, especially those of the English-educated class, regarded the British not as political adversaries but as paternalistic protectors of the Malay way of life." Op. cit., 31.

<sup>64</sup> For example, Tunku Ahmad and Tunku Ismail were closely related to the royal houses of Pahang and Negri Sembilan respectively. Onn bin Ja'afar in Johore, Dato Husain in Pahang (one of the 4 major chiefs and the father of the present Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Abdul Razak bin Dato Husain), and Tunku Abdul Kadir in Singapore, all come from famous aristocratic families. All these figures held the leading position in their respective Malay associations.

<sup>65</sup> William R. Roff, The Origins ..., op. cit., 247.



exception with respect to the Malay left-wing movement. Early in 1930, Ibrahim bin Yaacob formed the Belia Malaya (Young Malaya) at Sultan Idris Training College modelled after the youth organizations in Indonesia. Belia Malaya was short-lived but its ideas were renewed in 1938 through the formation of the Kesatuan Melayu Muda (Young Malay Union), a political party founded in Kuala Lumpur by Ibrahim Yaacob and his like-minded.<sup>66</sup> As the party had no formal constitution and its activities left little records, there is no agreement as to its political objectives. According to Ishak bin Haji Mohamed, one of its founding members, the major aim of the Kesatuan Melayu Muda (KMM) was not to overthrow the government but "to stop the Malays being exploited by other races" and to arouse "nationalist feeling" among the Malays.<sup>67</sup> In Ibrahim Yaacob's writings, he claimed that the KMM was an effort to free Malaya from the foreign colonial domination and to bring about a united Indonesia-Raya or Melayu Raya embracing both Malaya and Indonesia.<sup>68</sup> In contrast with the various Malay political associations, the

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<sup>66</sup> In 1938, it had about 50 members, most of whom were Malay school teachers, staff and students of the Kuala Lumpur trade school, Serdang Agricultural School, and Sultan Idris Training College. Its leaders were Ibrahim Yaacob (President), Onan bin Haji Siraj (Vice-President), Abdul Karim Rashid (Secretary), Othman bin Abdullah (Treasurer), Hassan bin Manan, Mustapha bin Hussin, Ahmad Boestaman, Isa Mohamed bin Mahmud and Ishak bin Haji Mohamed. A number of these leaders have been active in the left-wing political movement in Malaya till now.

<sup>67</sup> William R. Roff, The Origins . . ., op. cit., 232.

<sup>68</sup> Ibrahim Yaacob, Nusa dan Bangsa Melayu (Malay Island and Race), (Djakarta: 1951), 50ff.





anti-colonial stand of the KMM was obvious. It had also shown an almost equal contempt for the Malay traditional elites, describing the ruling class as "the bourgeois-feudalist" profiting from colonial rule and maintaining their positions at the expense of the peasantry and the urban proletariat. By adhering to these views, the KMM had, consequently, antagonized both the Malay traditional forces and the British. In mid-1941, a few months before the Japanese attack, it was reported that the KMM had established links with the Japanese to serve as a fifth column in Malaya to conduct anti-British campaign.<sup>69</sup> In October 1941, the KMM was declared illegal by the British and Ibrahim Yaacob and many of his colleagues were detained and sentenced to jail. They were released by the Japanese in February 1942. The co-operation between the KMM and the Japanese occupation authorities was to make the former the focus of the Malay drive for a Melayu Raya for the period of the Occupation.

It can thus be seen that the Malay movement for community-building on a pan-Malayan scale began as a reaction against the encroachment upon all aspects of Malay life by the non-Malay immigrant population, especially the British and the Chinese. It is, therefore, important to examine what role the British had played in shaping the pattern of communal relationships in Malaya.

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<sup>69</sup>It was alleged that through these links, the Malay daily Warta Malaya was brought by Japanese businessmen to conduct anti-British offensive in Malaya. See Radin Soenarno, op. cit., 19-22.



To begin with, the British Residential System in the FMS and UMS was based on the recognition that the nine states were Malay states. At the turn of this century, non-Malay immigrants sharply increased and outnumbered the Malay population. Despite this demographic change brought about by British immigration policy, the British continued to adhere to a strict distinction between the natives and the aliens. Right from the beginning, this distinction was based not upon a division between immigrants and non-immigrants but on criteria of economic function, racial origin and cultural similarity or dissimilarity, because Sumatran, Javanese and other Indonesian immigrants, in large number, were automatically given legal status as Malays.<sup>70</sup>

Due to the great economic change in the peninsula, the increasing pressure of the non-Malay communities for equal treatment and the Malay agitations for special rights, two schools of thought on the position of the Malays and the policy of the colonial government emerged in the early part of the 1920's. The first maintained that the peninsula was Tanah Melayu (Malay Soil) and that as rightful owners, the Malays should be given a privileged position in political life. This school regarded the Chinese and Indians as "only tolerated guests in

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<sup>70</sup> See Tan Cheng Lock, "Memorandum to Sir Samuel Wilson, December 1932", in his Malayan Problems: From a Chinese Point of View (Singapore: Tansco, 1947), 77.





a country belonging to the Malays."<sup>71</sup> The rival school adhered to a Pan-Malayan outlook, favored the extension of the federal arrangement to the UMS, and tended to see the peninsula as one country and the Malays as only one of the several races composing it. After the mid-1920's, the British decided not to change their pro-Malay policy, in spite of the obvious tendency of the non-Malay immigrants toward permanent settlement in Malaya.

From the British point of view, the pro-Malay school of thought had a number of advantages. First, this policy strengthened British rule in Malaya as it satisfied Malay communal sentiment. Second, as an arbitrator and adjudicator, the British saw their role as essentially one of preserving the distinctions between the separate communities. With no electorate or sophisticated articulation structures to worry about, they could afford to administer the various groups of the Malayan society differently according to the principles of expediency and indirect rule. Finally, by portraying the Chinese and Indians as unassimilable and preferring to be left alone, the British administration made it possible to avoid expensive and troublesome responsibility for integrating even the local-born and domiciled non-Malays with a larger Malayan society.

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<sup>71</sup>P. T. Bauer, "Nationalism and Politics in Malaya", Foreign Affairs, 25, 3 (April 1947), 505.





In the long run, however, the British pro-Malay policy was fatally divisive. As the distinction between natives and aliens was not made according to political criteria but purely on the basis of race, it gave an encouraging impetus to the communal drive of the Malays who had regarded themselves as the legitimate sons of the soil enjoying special rights and privileges while the non-Malays were merely alien intruders who could be expelled. As Tan Cheng Lock, the outspoken representative of the local-born and domiciled section of the Chinese community, pointed out, the policy of preference for one race and discrimination against another

(a) will ... create a distinct breach in the relationship between the Malays and the other non-Malay races inhabiting this Peninsula particularly the Chinese and Indians, which will inevitably in course of time widen into open antagonism between them, and (b) will tend to set up a sort of caste system dividing Malayan society into three principal sections based on race with the British ... as the Brahmins of the land, the Malays as the next superior and twice-born caste, and the Chinese and the others as the lowest in caste rank, i.e., as the Sudras or Pariahs.<sup>72</sup>

As seen earlier, the British pro-Malay policy was carried out with greater vigor after the mid-1920's. It found expression not only in the recruitment policy of the colonial administration but also in

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<sup>72</sup>Tan Cheng Lock, op. cit., 77-78.



the decentralization scheme which was adopted to restore substantial power to the Malay states in the FMS as a response to the post-war slump in the 1920's and the subsequent great depression around the early 1930's.<sup>73</sup> For the first time, a number of the local-born Chinese rose in protest as they saw that Chinese political status had not been given recognition and was ignored in the changes initiated under the decentralization program. Seeing that Chinese political and business interests had been adversely affected by the new measures, Tan Cheng Lock expressed his fear that the restoration of legislative power to the "powerful State Council dominated by the Malays and a pro-Malay British Resident" would "produce, develop and perfect ... a purely autocratic form of government based mainly on the taxation of non-Malay people ... without their adequate and effective representation ...."<sup>74</sup> He called for the establishment of "a Malayan Community with a Malayan consciousness" and a "Malaya for Malaysians and not for one section of it only."<sup>75</sup> Tan Cheng Lock warned that

If their [Chinese] loyalty is doubted  
and they are distrusted and made to

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<sup>73</sup>For an account of the decentralization scheme, see Rupert Emerson, op. cit., 153-182.

<sup>74</sup>Tan Cheng Lock, op. cit., 76. For a study of Tan's leadership of the Chinese community, see Soh Eng Lim, "Tan Cheng Lock: His Leadership of the Malayan Chinese", Journal of Southeast Asian History, 1, 1 (March 1960), 29-55.

<sup>75</sup>Tan Cheng Lock, op. cit., 80.





feel they are regarded as semi-aliens and not wanted, they will lose hope in this country and in their despair will naturally turn their eyes to China. They will then incur the charge (already used as a weapon against them) of bearing a dual allegiance, which will not only do infinite damage and injury to their interests and welfare here but will certainly not be to the good of Malaya as a whole.<sup>76</sup>

In spite of his sincerity, Tan's plea to Sir Samuel Wilson for communal equality was met with a widespread Malay antagonism, and went unheard by the British.<sup>77</sup> As a matter of fact, the concept of a Malayan Malaya raised by Tan was rejected by the British high Commissioner (Sir Hugh Clifford) in his statement of policy to the Federal

<sup>76</sup> Tan Cheng Lock, op. cit., 79. See also idem, A Collection of Speeches and Writings by Dato' Sir Cheng-lock Tan (Singapore: Craftsman Press Ltd., n.d.), 1-3.

<sup>77</sup> In his report Sir Samuel Wilson stressed that from a purely economic point of view "it would no doubt be advisable ... to have one Central Government administering the whole Territory". But he pointed out the political aspect of the problem, the discontents of the Rulers and the promises that had been given, and added: "Moreover it seems clear that the maintenance of the position, authority, and prestige of the Malay Rulers must always be a cardinal point in British policy: and the encouragement of indirect rule will probably prove the greatest safeguard against the political submersion of the Malays which would result from the development of popular government on western lines. For, in such a government, the Malays would be hopelessly outnumbered by the other races owing to the great influx of immigrants that had taken place into Malaya during the last few years." See Report of Sir Samuel Wilson on His Visit to Malaya in 1932, Cmd. 4276, 1933, 12.



Council in 1927:

These States were, when the British Government was invited by their Rulers and Chiefs to set their troubled houses in order, Muhammadan Monarchies: such they are today, and such they must continue to be. No mandate has ever been extended to us by Rajas, Chiefs or people to vary the system of Government which has existed in these territories from time immemorial; and in these days, when democratic and socialist theories and doctrines are spreading like an infection, bringing with them, too often, not peace but a sword, I feel it incumbent upon me to emphasize ... the utter inapplicability of any form of democratic or popular government to the circumstances of these States. The adoption of any kind of government by majority would forthwith entail the complete submersion of the indigenous population, who would find themselves hopelessly outnumbered by the folk of other races; and this would produce a situation which would amount to a betrayal of trust which the Malays of these States, from the highest to the lowest, have been taught to repose in His Majesty's Government.<sup>78</sup>

This statement reflects the manner in which the British had maintained

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<sup>78</sup> Proceedings of the Federal Council of the F.M.S., 1927, B113. A similar remark was made by David Ormsby Gore, Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1928 after a visit to Malaya: "Our position in every State rests on solemn treaty obligations. ... They were, they are, they must remain 'Malay' States, and the primary objective of our share in the administration of these countries must always be the progress of the indigenous Malay inhabitants .... To me the maintenance of the position, authority, and prestige of the Malay Rulers is a cardinal point of policy." See Report by the Rt. Hon. W. G. A. Ormsby Gore, M.P., on His Visit to Malaya, Ceylon, and Java during the Year 1928, Cmd. 3235, 1928, 17-18.





their presence and control in Malaya and the official determination to provide special treatment to the Malays who were referred to as "indigenous" despite the fact that "immigration from the Indonesian Archipelago has continued to the present day and that a very considerable proportion of the present Malay population is made up of immigrants who were themselves born elsewhere or whose forebears came to Malaya only in the last few decades."<sup>79</sup> The practice of making a distinction between the "natives" and the "aliens" purely on the basis of racial identity rather than on residential or citizenship requirements laid down the basis of Malay bumiputrahism on which the whole claim of Malay supremacy was built.

#### British Rule and Communal Outlooks

British pro-Malay policy, which was formulated on the ground of racial origin, had greatly aggravated, if not created, communal suspicion and hostility. As the favorite sons of the soil, the Malays tended to see the special position accorded to them not as a form of protection for the weaker group in the society but as the assertion of the superior claims of the rightful owners of the country. Right from the 1920's up to the Japanese invasion, the demand for supremacy in a "Malaya for the Malays" had been one of the driving forces behind

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<sup>79</sup> Rupert Emerson, op. cit., 16; see also 12-13, 499-500. T. H. Silcock thought that the claim that Malays owned Malaya was a "hysterical nonsense." See his Dilemma in Malaya (London: Fabian Publications Ltd., 1949), 11-12.





Malay community-building on a peninsula-wide scale. The horizontal identification among members of the Malay community had been strengthened not only by the growing awareness of their common racial and religious identity but also, most importantly, by the perceived fear of being submerged by alien domination. The fact that the drive for Malay supremacy, which was originally the concern of the Malay ruling class, became one of the most important unifying agents among the Malay ra'ayat throughout the peninsula had a far-reaching bearing on Malay outlook and communal relations in the country. As all political crises in the pre-war years had been resolved in favor of Malay supremacy, a pattern of orientation had been created in the mind of the Malays in which their relationship with the non-Malay immigrants was seen not as one with their fellow citizens but as one with "aliens".

British policy of indirect rule<sup>80</sup> was equally divisive as it tended to reinforce communal exclusiveness and hinder the growth of

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<sup>80</sup> British approach of indirect rule was well outlined by W. H. Treacher, the Acting Resident-General of the F.M.S. in a statement made in 1900: "The general policy of the British advisers has been to interfere as little as possible with the manners, customs, methods and prejudices of the different nationalities composing the population of the States; to interfere not at all in matters touching the Mohammadan religion - the religion of the Malays; to attract capital - European, Chinese and other; to encourage the immigration of Chinese, Indian and other labourers; to assist the development of the mineral and agricultural resources of the States by making roads wherever the necessity for them was apparent, by constructing railways, by works of drainage and irrigation; by establishing security for life and property, by constructing Courts of Justice, by opening free hospitals and schools, by giving good titles to lands and by abolishing import duties ... and all restraints on trade, commerce and industry." Report on the F.M.S. 1900, Cmd. 815, 1901, 7. See also, supra, note 34.



intercommunal identification. It is true that the British did not deliberately "divide and rule" because the communal divisions were already there;<sup>81</sup> but many aspects of the British approach of indirect rule produced the effect of deepening and accentuating these divisions. By adopting a policy which encouraged the Malays to stick to the rural land while engaging the Chinese and Indian in mining, plantation, and commercial pursuits, the British succeeded in preserving the traditional outlook of the Malay community. Up to the outbreak of the Japanese invasion, the vast majority of the Malay ra'ayat still remained an unmobilized population<sup>81</sup> dominated by a parochial-subject culture and isolated from the new economic forces at work in their environment. On the other hand, the outlook of the non-Malay immigrants had been subjected to a process of transformation. The process of migration from the peasant villages in Southern China and India to the peninsula, which involved a change of environment and economic roles was itself an important factor inducing significant changes in man's orientations and outlooks. In addition to experien-

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<sup>80</sup>See R. S. Milne, "Politics and Government" in Wang Gungwu (ed.), Malaysia: A Survey (New York: Praeger, 1964), 323. Gayl D. Ness holds that British policy was more a pluralistic one than one of divide and rule. See his Bureaucracy and Rural Development in Malaysia (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 44-45.

<sup>81</sup>For Karl W. Deutsch's definition of a mobilized population, see supra, 69, note 27.





cing the so-called cultural-shock and the stress placed upon them by the newness of the alien environment, many Chinese and Indians were exposed to urban modernity and the influence of British culture. This experience tended to increase their capacity to accommodate and adapt to new patterns of behavior and orientation. It is true that this effect should not be overstated because the non-Malays usually arrived in Malaya in large groups and tended to live with their kith and kin in a new replica of their homeland; but it does indicate that the stage was set for the Malays and the non-Malays to develop in two opposite directions: i.e., the former remained unmobilized while the latter were in a process of being mobilized. As seen earlier, a good number of the Malays in Malaya were Indonesian immigrants. These Indonesian immigrants were, however, less subject to the process of mobilization than the Chinese and the Indians, because immigration from Indonesia to the peninsula required little realignment of social relations and little change in the economic roles of those involved. On the other hand, since the Chinese and the Indians were invited to Malaya to undertake the roles of developing the mineral and agricultural resources of the country, they also stood to share a major part of its rewards. Thus, a gap between the Malay and the non-Malay communities in the fields of economic, cultural, and educational advancement was created and the phenomena of occupational specialization and residential

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separation along communal lines began to take root in the Malayan society.

In the field of public services, the British pursued a policy of giving preferences to the Malays. As this policy was justified on the ground that the Malays were the native people of the country, it greatly encouraged the Malays to identify with the ruling function of the political system and look upon themselves as the owners of the country and the non-Malays as birds of passage subject to their unquestionable rule. This distinction between the ruler and the ruled tended to prevent the integration of the non-Malays into the Malayan political process from taking place. As a result, the non-Malays tended to see themselves as unwanted children and look at the Malayan polity as a remote and alien entity associated only with the extraction of taxes and the maintenance of public order. Since they were denied any substantial political rights, it was only natural that they had little conscious political attachment to the country.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Commenting on the issue, the editorial of the Straits Times wrote in 1945: "the principle of preference and priority for the Malays as the original owners of the country ... has been invoked ... to justify retrenching non-Malays and retaining Malays in the Government services in times of slump, refusing to allow non-Malays to take up padi land, granting a monopoly of the junior administrative services to Malays, lowering the colour bar of the Malayan Civil Service to Malays only, and generally, making the Chinese, Indian and Ceylonese communities of those states feel that they were only there on sufferance and must accept an inferior, undefined, and insecure status as aliens who never in any circumstances could be treated as subjects of the Sultans." The Straits Times, editorial, October 18, 1945, 2.





Until the 1920's, the Chinese in the peninsula and the Straits Settlements were allowed a large scope of internal autonomy and permitted to look after themselves through regional and clan associations, secret societies, and the talents and strength of outstanding individuals, usually known as an-tua or tao-nan (headman) or kapitan (captain).<sup>83</sup> The Indian laborers in the rubber estates were put under the control of their own Indian Agents appointed from India. While the Indians were relatively satisfied with the arrangement and continued to look to India for protection, the Chinese were largely forced by circumstances to resort to self-help organizations to look after the general welfare of their own community. On the one hand, China was not only too weak but also unwilling to render any protection for the Nanyang (South Seas) Chinese.<sup>84</sup> During the first four decades

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<sup>83</sup> See W. L. Blythe, "Historical Sketch of Chinese Labour in Malaya", Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Malayan Branch), 20, 1 (June 1947), 64-114; and A. E. Coope, "The Kangchu System in Johore", ibid., 14, 3 (December 1936), 247-263. The following statement was indicative of British attitude toward the governing of the non-Malay communities: "As the inhabitants consist of people of different nations, and of different provinces of those nations, it is advisable to leave them under the direction of the headmen of each province, and to interfere as little as possible in the regulations which may be established by each for the government of his own countrymen." See Duke of Wellington, Supplementary Despatches and Memoranda, edited by his son, the Duke of Wellington, (London: 1858-1872), vol. I, 25-26. This remark was made by the Duke, then Colonel Wellesley, after his visit to Penang in 1797.

<sup>84</sup> The traditional practice of the Chinese Imperial Government had always been to discourage emigration. This was particularly so during the Ch'ing Dynasty as the Manchus feared that Chinese emigrants might set up centers of disaffection abroad to overthrow Manchu rule. In 1740,





of the 20th century, it was the Nanyang Chinese who had contributed more to the political development of China than the other way round. On the other hand, the British were also reluctant to offer any protective assistance to the Chinese beyond the normal safeguards of life and property. As a result, the Chinese in Malaya were forced to rely upon their own organizational abilities to provide almost all the necessary services for their own community, ranging from education, social welfare, public clinics, homes for the aged and orphans, to the management of ancestral temples and cemetery sets. Although the British had increased their interference in the affairs of the Chinese community after the 1911 Revolution in China, the move was motivated by nothing more than a desire on the British part to stamp out the growth of anti-British sentiment aroused among some sections of the Chinese population by the Kuomintang and Communist sympathizers.<sup>85</sup>

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when a large scale massacre of Chinese immigrants took place in Java, the Ch'ing Emperor Chien Lung declared that China would have nothing to do with these unwanted subjects who had deserted their ancestors' graves to seek economic benefits abroad. See Hsu Yun-ts'iao, "tung-nan-ya hua-tzu wen-ti ti hui-ku yi chien-tan", Hsin-Hsieh Chi-Kang, 2, 1 (September 1969), 3-6. Republican China was more interested in getting financial support from the Nanyang Chinese than to provide them protection. When the Nanyang Chinese had trouble, they were left to take care of themselves; but when China had trouble, they were asked to make financial contributions. This was why the Nanyang Chinese described themselves as being hai-wai ku-erh (oversaes orphans).

<sup>85</sup> See Png Poh-Seng, "The Kuomintang in Malaya", in K. G. Tregonning (ed.), op. cit., 214-225. Interestingly, the stern measures (such as deportation) adopted by the British against the "undesirable" elements of the Chinese community had been of significance in reinforcing the



The result of communal autonomy was the emergence of a situation in which each of the different communities constituted an independent cultural whole isolated, to a large extent, from the rest of the society. While internal unity and integration within each community were increasing, intercommunal contacts seldom went beyond the minimal functional necessity in the market place, and "there was no sympathy, no personal understanding, no participation in common ideas or purposes."<sup>86</sup> Regarding themselves as hai-wai ku-erh (overseas orphans) or ke-jen (guests) in a foreign land and taught by traditional Chinese education and clan rules to conform to the will of the government,<sup>87</sup> the vast majority of the Chinese in Malaya took great care not

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traditional Chinese tendency to avoid "open politics", to work to influence the government through personal links, or to engage in underground political activities. See also Victor Purcell, The Chinese in Malaya (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1967), 155-173, 209-221; and W. L. Blythe, The Impact of Chinese Secret Societies in Malaya (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).

<sup>86</sup> Stanley W. Jones, Public Administration in Malaya (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1953), 99.

<sup>87</sup> The Chinese attitude of avoiding the government is clearly reflected in the three injunctions which the clan rules generally give to their members: The first injunction is not to discuss political matters. The second is to pay taxes promptly to keep clear of the government. The last injunction is to avoid litigation. Traditional Chinese education based on the Confucian classics also encouraged the Chinese to be submissive to the government. Submissiveness to authority (parents, elders, and superiors as well as mores and norms) is one of the approved attitudes and behavior patterns from the Analects of Confucius. See Wolfgang Franke, "Some Investigation in the Structure, Concepts and Ideas of Chinese Culture", in S. Takdir Alisjahbana, Xavier S. Thani Nayagam and Wang Gungwu (eds.), The Cultural Problems of Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur: The Malaysian Society of Orientalists, 1966), 139-163.





to become involved in political controversies in Malaya. Without assurance of equality in Malaya, both the Chinese and the Indians continued to retain their emotional and cultural ties with their homelands, which offered a possible chance of retreat. Under the circumstances, this tendency is understandable, but it had been used as a weapon to deny them political rights by both the Malay ruling elites<sup>88</sup> and the British who, ironically, had done little to "encourage them to feel that Malaya was their real home."<sup>89</sup>

Under the British educational policy, four types of school system were brought into existence. The British provided free Malay vernacular schools with free textbooks for the Malay children. There were also Malay religious schools in which Malay children were taught the Koran and Islamic principles. The medium of instruction in these schools was Malay. Malay vernacular schools offered only a four-year schooling at the primary level for the Malay pupils. If a Malay

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<sup>88</sup>For example, the Malay paper Saudara wrote on November 7, 1931: "The allegiance of the Chinese and the Indians is only to serve their own individual ends, while they were in this country. All these peoples have their own countries and some have rulers to love and to serve, no matter for how many generations they have been in this country."

<sup>89</sup>Tan Cheng Lock, "Memorandum on the Future of Malaya" in his Malayan Problems ..., op. cit., 15. Tan charged that the British had turned a deaf ear to all Chinese appeals that they should be enabled to completely identify themselves with the interests of Malaya. See also Lawrence S. Finkelstein, "Prospects for Self-Government in Malaya", Far Eastern Survey, 21 (January 30, 1952), 9-17.



student wished to go for further studies after his four-year vernacular education, the only way open to him was either to seek admission to an English school or to become a teacher by joining the Sultan Idris Training College. As curricula in Malay vernacular schools had been biased in favor of rural life and traditional culture, the expansion of vernacular education served to reinforce the parochial outlook of the Malay community rather than to reorientate the Malay youths to adapt to a changing and multicultural society which had been brought about by the great influx of non-Malay immigrants.

English schools were established by public funds, although a good number of private English schools were financed by Christian missions with government aids. The primary aim of English education was to train a sufficient number of Malays, Chinese or Indians to fill clerical positions in the administration and in European business enterprises. As the English language was associated with the government and the colonial masters, it had been regarded as an important access to power and prestige. In the mentality of the masses, to be able to speak English was a mark of modernity. However, the expansion of English schools had done little to unite the various communities because English education had had little Malayan content. In fact, as will be seen later, it had sub-divided the various communities into the English-educated and the vernacular-educated compartments.

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Although the British government in Malaya had established some schools in the rubber estates for the children of the Indian laborers, the rest of the Indian community was allowed to set up its own private educational institutions. Most of these schools adopted Tamil as the medium of instruction and their outlook was oriented toward Indian rather than Malayan culture. Chinese vernacular schools, on the other hand, were brought into being almost purely on Chinese private initiative and financed by contributions from wealthy Chinese businessmen and by levies and subscriptions from the Chinese masses. They were allowed to exist "for the most part outside the orbit of the Education Department"<sup>90</sup> until the mid-1930's when the British introduced a grants-in-aid program as a means to gain control over the arrangements of curricula and staff recruitment in Chinese vernacular schools. As the syllabuses and textbooks used in Chinese vernacular schools were the same as those used in the schools of China proper, Chinese education in Malaya tended not only to perpetuate the Chinese emotional and cultural ties with China but also to submit Chinese children in Malaya to the influence of political change in China. Ever since the 1920's, the British had tried to put the Chinese schools under the supervision of the Education Department but the motive of the British was not to improve the academic standard of the Chinese schools or to

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<sup>90</sup> Leon Comber, "Chinese Education: Perennial Malayan Problem", Asian Survey, 1, 8 (October 1961), 31.





implant a Malayan consciousness in the mind of the Chinese pupils through curriculum reform, but to clear these schools from Communist or other anti-imperialist influences. Thus, despite British intervention, the outlook of the Chinese schools had undergone little change until the outbreak of the Japanese invasion. While Chinese vernacular schools became an important uniting force among the different dialect groups of the Chinese community due to the use of a common syllabus and a common medium of instruction (Mandarin) in these schools, most of their graduates emerged essentially ignorant of the Malayan society. The Malay and Indian schools also produced the same result, because vernacular schools were more a means of communal socialization than a tool of reorientating the members of the various communities to a new common outlook. Thus, the pattern of vernacular education as it emerged under British laissez-faire policy tended to strengthen communal identification and solidarity rather than intercommunal ties.

Although one may argue that the English-medium schools constituted a unifying force in the Malayan society because they were the meeting place of children from all communities, the fact remains that they were not oriented to a Malayan outlook but to the prospect of a comfortable life. As Wolfgang Franke, a sinologist, puts it,

The English education ... usually remains superficial. Only a small number of outstanding students in a few eminent schools are able to penetrate to the basic values



of western culture and to acquire a genuine western humanistic education to replace the lost ... one. The majority, however, remain satisfied with their superficial English education which offers them good professional opportunities and an income high enough to allow them to enjoy the comforts of life. ... Outwardly, they often like to show off their English education and to look down with contempt upon their [vernacular-educated] countrymen. Whereas the Malays are usually rooted in the ... Islamic tradition with its own system of human and moral values, many of the English-educated Chinese are ignorant of any values except money.<sup>91</sup>

Thus, many of the English-educated, especially the Chinese, had experienced an identity crisis whose effect might well become apparent should English stop to be the dominating language in the Malayan society. Furthermore, far from being a uniting agent, the English schools had produced a privileged class within each of the various communities whose cultural and political outlook was different from that of their vernacular-educated counterparts.<sup>92</sup> Meanwhile, the official

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<sup>91</sup>Wolfgang Franke, "Problems of Chinese Education in Singapore and Malaya", *Malaysian Journal of Education*, 2, 2 (December 1965), 189-190. See also *idem*, "Some Remarks on Chinese Education in Sarawak and Sabah", *ibid.*, 3, 1 (June 1966), 1-10; and *idem*, "Some Problems of Chinese Schools and Education in Southeast Asia: In Particular Malaysia and Singapore", *Revue du Sud-Est Asiatique et de l'Extreme Orient*, 1 (1968), 115-121.

<sup>92</sup>This question was discussed in a forum in the University of Malaya in Singapore between the students of that University and Nanyang University in 1959 and a number of conclusions were drawn : 1. Due to the disparity of official treatment, the English-educated were





pro-Malay policy and the advantages and privileges offered to the English-educated tended to alienate the affection of the Chinese-educated youth toward the Malayan political system. Their resentment and frustration at their exclusion from a rightful place in the Malayan society had led a good number of them toward political radicalism.<sup>93</sup>

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made to feel superior while the Chinese educated, being neglected, had a grudge to bear. 2. The English educated were oriented to England and acted along Western lines. The Chinese educated, on the other hand, received education patterned after China's and adopted Chinese ways of thinking and behavior. 3. Influenced by Chinese traditional culture and philosophy, the Chinese educated were more serious-minded, sober and modest, whereas the English educated were more lively, permissive, liberal and sociable. 4. A language barrier existed between them with the Chinese educated seeing English as associated with colonialism. These factors combined to produce a situation of mutual exclusiveness and sometimes hostility between the two groups. See "Is There a Barrier Between the English Educated and the Chinese Educated?", University Tribune, 6 (November 1959), 7, 4. (The Tribune, published by the former Students' Union of Nanyang University, is available for research purposes in the banned book section of the Nanyang University Library with the permission of the chief librarian). Similarly, one western writer observes that "In Malaysia the social division between hua-ch'iao who received a basically Chinese education and those schooled in English is almost as significant as the distinction between Chinese and Malay." Douglas P. Murray, "Chinese Education in Southeast Asia", China Quarterly, 20 (October-December 1964), 88.

<sup>93</sup> Wolfgang Franke argues that it was not Chinese education itself but the official discrimination that had led the Chinese-educated elites toward political radicalism. He said: "the majority of the graduates of Chinese secondary schools are compelled ... to look for a job, often much below that for which they are qualified. The result is a wide-spread feeling among these students that they have been unfairly treated. Due to past experiences, in some circles not familiar with Chinese culture, the opinion seems to prevail that Chinese education and Chinese schools necessarily further a political radicalisation of the pupils. But it is actually not Chinese education as such, but



Communal and educational autonomy had also produced a situation in which the various agencies of political socialization - family, neighborhood, peer group, work situation, voluntary associations, political parties and media of mass communication - were divided along communal lines and tended to perpetuate the fragmented pattern of communal cultures and the communal pattern of political orientations. Thus, a Malay might spend his whole life in what might be thought of as a cultural enclave in the Malayan society. Family, neighborhood, peer group, work associates, trade union, political party, the community of Allah's believers, secondary organization, and newspaper might seal him off from effective contact and communication with the members of other communities (including members of his own community with a different educational background) having different cultural outlook and political orientations. The same might be said of the Chinese, the Indians, and the English-educated as a group. Not only did each of the communities have their own newspapers written in their own language, other printed media of communication - books, magazines and periodicals - were also linguistically communal. When radio services were introduced, they were broadcast in the four main

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resentment and frustration that are leading people towards radical political doctrines ... which can be prevented only by eliminating the sources of potential frustration." "Problems of Chinese Education in Singapore and Malaya", *op. cit.*, 185-186. It is interesting to note that throughout the history of China revolutionary uprisings had usually been planned and led by the frustrated educated elites.





languages and a number of dialects. Movies and theatres were similarly divided. As a result, the media of mass communication were generally unable to function effectively in disseminating unbiased information regarding social and political problems. Very often were political demands articulated by one community either with little knowledge of the contending views of other communities or without being made known to the rest of the society or both. Furthermore, as guardians and owners of the country, the British and the Malay ruling elites had dominated the formal channels of access to policy-making, while the Chinese and the Indians, being regarded as aliens, had usually been denied any adequate means of direct access. This seems to explain why some of them had tended to resort to extra-legal or illegitimate channels of articulation and access.

To sum up, British rule in Malaya tended to support the communal character of the Malayan society. Right up to the outbreak of the Second World War, the communal pattern of social grouping and cultural orientations had already taken shape, and Malay communal sub-culture, based on historical claim and with the support of the British, had emerged as the dominating factor in the Malayan political system. The political crises involving the concept of a Malay Malaya and that of a Malayan Malaya took place in the mid-1920's and the early 1930's but the conflict had been an unequal one. On the one hand, whatever

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be their ideological differences, the three Malay elite groups - the autochthonous intelligentsia, the Arabic-educated religious reformists, and the English-educated bureaucrats and aristocratic elites - were unanimously united on the issue that Malaya was a Malay country and it should be for the Malays. Backed by the British, they had effectively defended their claim, although it had never been accepted by the active public of the non-Malay communities as being a just and legitimate claim. On the other hand, the voice raised by a few English-speaking Chinese who represented the active public of the Chinese community went largely unheard because they had no organizational support due to the apathetic attitude of the Chinese masses toward involvement in the political affairs of Malaya. Because of their educational background, they had also found it difficult to acquire the support of the Chinese educated and China-born Chinese. Some Chinese educated elites who were active in politics were more interested in China's political development than in defending their political position in Malaya. At the same time, the Indian coolies were equally indifferent to, and ignorant of, Malayan problems. The crises were, thus, resolved in favor of Malay communalism - a Malay Malaya.

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## CHAPTER IV

### THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION, THE MALAYAN UNION CRISIS AND THE EMERGENCY

It is true that the British began to use the term "British Malaya" to refer to the Malayan peninsula as a whole in 1883;<sup>1</sup> but it was meaningful only as a geographical expression to most of the Malay ra'ayat who continued to owe their primary allegiance to their separate sultanates and local chiefs. The emergence of the three Malay elite groups in the 1920's and their common quest for a privileged position for the Malays as sons of the soil had stimulated the growth of a common Malay identity and a pan-Malay outlook but this sentiment was still not strong enough to take the place of state attachments and particularism before the War. Moreover, the peninsula was divided into 12 territorial groups (the 9 Malay states and the 3 Straits Settlements) and 11 administrative units (the 9 Malay states,

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<sup>1</sup>The term was first used by the Governor of the Straits Settlements, Sir Frederick Weld, in his address to the Royal Colonial Institute in 1883. See William R. Roff, The Origins of Malay Nationalism (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1967), 91.





the FMS, and the Straits Settlements). Sarawak and North Borneo (Sabah) were two separate entities, ruled by the Brooke family and the British North Borneo Company respectively. These separate administrative and political structures did not seem to encourage the growth of a pan-Malayan orientation. For commercial reasons, some sections of the Chinese and European communities favored increased centralization but this demand did not meet with British support. Beginning with the decentralization scheme, the British had increased their efforts to preserve the individual identity of the Malay states and to maintain a semblance of Malay sovereignty.<sup>2</sup>

It was seen in Chapter III that through the device of indirect rule the image of Malay sovereign control had been maintained; but since "Malay political strength ... was largely British-created and British-operated, what the Malays enjoyed was mostly political privilege and not political power."<sup>3</sup> As a result, although Malay political culture had been given recognition by the British as the ruling culture of the Malay states, such recognition was of future, rather than immediate, significance to the non-Malay communities. Despite the fact that the Malays had been recognized by the British as the

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<sup>2</sup>Supra, 182-188.

<sup>3</sup>J. Norman Parmer, "Constitutional Change in Malaya's Plural Society", Far Eastern Survey, 26, 10 (October 1957), 146.



rightful owners of Malaya, up to the Second World War, the non-Malay immigrants, regarded as aliens both by themselves and by the Malays and the British, had not been under any social and political pressure to assimilate themselves to the Malay ways of life and culture. As long as their business and other interests were not adversely affected, most of the non-Malays tended to see the special position accorded to the Malays as exclusively an Anglo-Malay arrangement which, although it had little direct bearing on them, proved that they were only in Malaya on sufferance. Furthermore, there was imposed between the Malays and the non-Malays a so-called Pax Britannica in which each community had been assigned a separate role complementary to, rather than conflicting with, that of the other. The British had been able to act as a wall, so to speak, among the various races. The elites or near-elites of each racial group directed their demands and grievances to the British rather than to each other.<sup>4</sup> As a consequence, direct communal confrontation had been avoided and in spite of the underlying antagonism, fear, and suspicion, communal harmony had been outwardly maintained. This does not, however, mean that Pax Britannica had completely eradicated the possibility of a communal clash. In fact, such a communal balance was upset by the Japanese invasion and

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<sup>4</sup>See R. S. Milne, Government and Politics in Malaysia (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1967), 25.





a new era of communal relations emerged in Malaya with the termination of the Japanese Occupation in 1945.

### Japanese Occupation and Communal Relations

Malaya was attacked by the Japanese in December 1941. Within two months, all the present component units of Malaysia had come under the occupation of the Japanese invading forces. The occupation, which was to last three and a half years, brought an end to the precarious communal balance in Malaya and succeeded in transforming the latent antagonistic rivalry and enmity between the Malay and Chinese population into violent communal clashes.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Unfortunately, the Japanese occupation and its effects on Malaysian politics have as yet not received adequate scholarly attention from both historians and political researchers. Some studies have been done on Japanese rule in Southeast Asia but very few of them deal specifically with the Malayan situation, although interest in the subject has grown in recent years. See, for example, Willard H. Elsbree, Japan's Role in Southeast Asian Nationalist Movement 1940-45 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953); F. C. Jones, Japan's New Order in East Asia: Its Rise and Fall, 1937-1945 (London: Oxford University Press, 1954); H. J. Benda, The Crescent and the Rising Sun (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1958); M. A. Aziz, Japan's Colonialism and Indonesian Politics (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1955); Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, Some Aspects of Indonesian Politics under the Japanese Occupation 1944-1945 (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesian Project, 1961); Josef Silverstein (ed.), Southeast Asia in World War II: Four Essays (Yale University: Southeast Asia Studies Monograph Series No. 7, 1966); F. Spencer Chapman, The Jungle Is Neutral (London: Chatto and Windus, 1949); Chin Kee Onn, Malaya Upside Down (Singapore: Jitts & Co., 1946); N. I. Law and H. M. Cheng, This Singapore (Singapore: City Book Store, 1947); Lee Ting Hui, "Singapore under the Japanese 1942-1945", Journal of the South Seas Society, 17, 1 (1961-1962), 55-65; Itagaki Yoichi, "Outline of Japanese Policy in Indonesia and Malaya during the War with Special Reference to Nationalism of Respective Countries", The Annals of the Hitotsubashi, 2, 2 (April 1952), 185-201; Yoji Akashi, "Japanese Military Administration in Malaya: Its Formation and Evolution in Reference to Sultans, the Islamic Religion, and the Moslem-Malays 1941-1945", Asian





Although the sudden fall of Malaya was a surprise to those Malays who hitherto had been convinced of the superiority of British power, "the bulk of the Malays ... were not particularly hostile to the Japanese occupation, and many indeed welcomed the change since it promised to put an end to the economic and political encroachment of the Chinese."<sup>6</sup> Like other races, the Malays also suffered in the general economic hardships but on the whole, their social and political status remained almost unchanged as the Japanese now emerged as the new protector of their privileged position. On the one hand, the Japanese promised to break the economic lethargy of the Malays to enable them "to stand on their own feet" and if they were "to co-operate with Nippon Army toward the prompt establishment of the New Order and the Co-Prosperity Sphere", they were assured to be rewarded with a share of rubber land and properties in Malaya.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, like the British, the Japanese actively sought the support of the Malay rulers

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Studies, 7, 1 (April 1969), 81-110; idem, "Japanese Policy Towards the Malayan Chinese 1941-1945", Journal of Southeast Asian Studies, 1, 2 (September 1970), 61-89; idem, The Nanyang Chinese Anti-Japanese National Salvation Movement 1937-1941 (University of Kansas, Center for East Asian Studies, forthcoming). John Bastin and Robin W. Winks, (eds.), Malaysia: Selected Historical Readings (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1966) and K. G. Tregonning (ed.), Papers on Malayan History, (Singapore: Malaya Publishing House Ltd., 1962) also contain readings on the Japanese occupation.

<sup>6</sup>Victor Purcell, The Chinese in Malaya (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1967), 264. Purcell's study was first published in 1948.

<sup>7</sup>Lee Ting Hui, op. cit., 55, 57. The promise was issued in General T. Yamashita's statement upon his entry to Singapore.



as the Malay sultans offered "a convenient utility value to the military for pacifying and winning the indigenous Malay Muslims."<sup>8</sup>

Japanese directors were assigned to the Malay rulers and the system of sultanate was kept intact. In the government services, many Malays were promoted to responsible posts senior to those they had held under the British, while many non-Malay personnel were retrenched.<sup>9</sup>

Another Japanese measure to win Malay support was to increase Malay participation in government. In 1943, Malay councils at the district level were established. Council members were partly elected by the village headmen and partly appointed by the Japanese Occupation Administration. Regional councils with appointed members at the city and state level were also formed. In short, under the Japanese occupation, the belief that the Malays were the rightful owners of the

<sup>8</sup>Yoji Akashi, "Japanese Military Administration in Malaya ...", op. cit., 81. In a document prepared in March 1941 by the Japanese First Bureau (Operation) of the Army General Staff entitled "Principles of the Administration of Occupied Southern Areas", it was stated "Malaya is to be placed under Japanese rule and Malay states are to be guided by a supervisory military administration ... Sultans are to be left alone as the nominal rulers under the supervision of a military government, which shall be replaced by an advisory system once public order has been restored. Strict measures must be taken to respect the freedom of religion and belief as well as customs [in order to win the hearts of the local inhabitants]." As quoted in ibid., 82.

<sup>9</sup>In May 1942, an institute was established to train Malays in the Japanese method of administration and by 1944 about 2,000 Malay trainees were assigned to different administrative positions. During the same period, about 700 Malay technicians and mechanics were also trained to fill the specialist services. See Yoji Akashi, ibid., 93ff; Usha Mahajani, The Role of Indian Minorities in Burma and Malaya (Bombay: Vora and Co., 1960), 162-163; and Norton Ginsburg and Chester F. Roberts, Jr., Malaya (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1958), 441.





country had been vigorously reaffirmed. At the same time, Malay ways of life and their independence within the sphere of Islam had been left undisturbed by the Japanese. Dealing with the situation in Johore, Burridge observed:

the administrative machine was left almost intact: Japanese officials entered it only in a supervisory capacity. The [Malay] peasants continued their normal lives, and administrative officers continued to draw their salaries for the same kind of work.<sup>10</sup>

From the Japanese point of view, "the Malays were politically desirable but economically much less useful than the Chinese."<sup>11</sup> The Japanese solution to this problem was to stir up Malay communal sentiment and to use it in an intense anti-Chinese campaign. Before the actual invasion took place, Japanese businessmen and agents in Malaya had already begun to spread the idea of an "Asian Asia"<sup>12</sup> among the Malays and to establish links with the left-wing Kesatuan Melayu Muda (KMM) and other supporters of the idea of a Melayu Raya to conduct anti-British propaganda in Malaya. Immediately after the British surrender, the leaders of the KMM began to collaborate with the Japanese Occupation Authority, whereas the various pre-war Malay associations were dissolved,

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<sup>10</sup>Kenelm O. L. Burridge, "Racial Relations in Johore", Australian Journal of Politics and History, 2 (May 1957), 161.

<sup>11</sup>Lee Ting Hui, op. cit., 56.

<sup>12</sup>See Lee Ting Hui, "On the Question of Merdeka" (a debate with C. N. Parkinson translated in Chinese), Journal of South Seas Society, 16, 1-2 (1960), 27.



probably due to their pro-British attitude before the War. It was said that the collaboration was merely "a camouflage to cover [the KMM's] underground activities" against the Japanese.<sup>13</sup> This view, however, overlooked the fact that on the one hand, Malay underground resistance activities were negligible and, on the other, the real pre-occupation of the KMM leaders was to secure Japanese support for the creation of a Melayu Raya, a Greater Indonesia dominated by the Malay race,<sup>14</sup> rather than to drive the Japanese out of Malaya immediately. This was why it had won the sympathy and encouragement of the Japanese authorities.

At the beginning of Japanese rule, west-coast Malaya and Sumatra were brought under the control of a single headquarters in Singapore, and the economic, racial, linguistic and religious ties between the two areas were frequently stressed. Considerable propaganda capital was made out of the fact that under the Japanese "for the first time since 1824 the old lands of the Rhio-Johore empire were reunited."<sup>15</sup> In mid-1942, the KMM was reorganized by the Japanese

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<sup>13</sup>Radin Soenarno, "Malay Nationalism, 1900-1945", Journal of Southeast Asian History, 1, 1 (March 1960), 19.

<sup>14</sup>See Ibrahim Yaacob, Nusa dan Bangsa Melayu (The Malay Island and Race), (Djakarta: 1951), 59-60; and *idem*, Sekitar Malaya Merdeka (Concerning Free Malaya), (Djakarta: 1957), 21.

<sup>15</sup>Norton Ginsburg and Chester F. Roberts, Jr., *op. cit.*, 441-442. Although the plan was discarded in 1944, "there was some sign ... of an increasing Malay interest in Indonesian independence and a tendency to





through the formation of the Pembela Tanah Ayer (Avengers of the Fatherland) and Ibrahim Yaacob, the leader of the KMM, was made its commander-in-chief with the rank of a lieutenant colonel. In June 1945, the Gunsei (Military Administration) agreed to Ibrahim's request that Malaya be granted independence within a Greater Indonesia. At the same time, the Jakarta Charter drawn up by the Indonesian leaders also included Malaya and the Borneo states as Indonesian territories.<sup>16</sup>

In July 1945, the plan for the joint independence of the two territories was worked out by the KMM leaders, and to prepare for the event, the KMM was renamed as the Kesatuan Ra'ayat Indonesia Semenanjung (Union of the Peninsular Indonesian People) and a delegation including the representatives of the Malay sultans was organized to be

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identify with their Malay-Moslem neighbors. ... it is probable that the real growth of a pan-Malay movement should be dated from this period." Loc. cit... See also J. Kennedy, A History of Malaya (Kuala Lumpur: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1965), 260.

<sup>16</sup> On March 1, 1945, the Japanese in Java set up the Baden Pejelidek Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia (Investigating Committee for the Preparation of Indonesia's Independence). The Committee held a series of meetings in May 20-June 1 and July 10-17, in which the territorial limit of Indonesia was defined and the Jakarta Charter was adopted. See Mohamed Yamin (ed.), Naskah Persiapan Undang-Undang Dasar 1945 (Complete Drafts of the Basic Laws of 1945), (Djakarta: Jajasan Prapantja, 1945); an extract in English of these drafts can be found in Background to Indonesia's Policy towards Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur: Federal Department of Information, 1964), and S. Rajaratnam, Malaysia and the World (Singapore: Ministry of Culture, 1964), app. 32-40. See also L. C. Green, "Indonesia, the United Nations and Malaysia", Journal of Southeast Asian History, 6, 2 (September 1965), 71-72.





sent to Jakarta for the formal declaration of independence. On August 12, Sukarno and Hatta visited Taiping and held discussions with Ibrahim Yaacob and Burhanuddin Al-Helmy of the KMM. At the end of the meeting, Ibrahim Yaacob declared: "we, the Malays in Malaya are with loyalty, in full support of the idea of a single Motherland, with Malaya as a part of Free Indonesia."<sup>17</sup> The plan was, however, rendered abortive by the sudden surrender of the Japanese three days later. As a last attempt, the Japanese summoned an Independence Conference in Kuala Lumpur to which only the Malay leaders and representatives of the sultans, whom the Japanese regarded as "the rightful owners of Malaya", were invited.<sup>18</sup> The Conference decided to establish the Malay Nationalist Party and adopted a resolution to carry on the struggle for an independent Melayu Raya. Although the plan for a Greater Indonesia failed to materialize, through the Japanese-KMM efforts to gain Malay support for a union which would promise an increase in Malay and Muslim influence as against that of other communities, a pan-Malay sentiment had been stimulated.

The Indian community in Malaya also underwent a tremendous change during the Japanese occupation. Unlike the Chinese who had been

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<sup>17</sup>Ibrahim Yaacob, Sekitar Malaya Merdeka, op. cit., 29.

<sup>18</sup>See Lee Ting Hui, "Singapore Under the Japanese ...", op. cit., 62; and Yoji Akashi, "Japanese Military Administration in Malaya ...", op. cit., 105ff.



allowed to lead their lives independently, the Indian coolies in the rubber estates in the pre-war years had been closely supervised by the Malayan Controller of Labour and the Indian Agent appointed from India,<sup>19</sup> whose presence had reaffirmed their primordial attachment to their homelands. Due to the lack of their independent existence, the Indian laborers had been brought into, and shipped out of, Malaya like economic commodities, depending upon the need of the Malayan economy. Most of the Indian coolies were, however, satisfied with the way in which their interests had been looked after. As a result, unlike the Chinese hai-wai ku-erh (overseas orphans), they found a sense of security in maintaining their ties with their homelands.

During the Japanese occupation, a vigorous campaign was launched to stir up nationalist feeling among the local Indian population. The pre-war Central Indian Association was transformed and become a Japanese tool in the formation of the Indian Independence League.<sup>20</sup> With the support of the Japanese, Subhas Chandra Bose assumed political and military leadership of the Indian independence movement

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<sup>19</sup>See M. K. Muhammad Kunhi, "Indian Minorities in Ceylon, Burma and Malaysia", Indian Year Book of International Affairs, pt. 1 (1964), 408; J. Norman Parmer, Colonial Labor Policy and Administration: A History of Labor in the Rubber Plantation Industry in Malaya (Locust Valley, N. Y. : J. J. Augustin, 1960), 42ff; and Kernial Singh Sandhu, Indians in Malaya: Some Aspects of Their Immigration and Settlements (1786-1957) (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

<sup>20</sup>For a study of the activities of the Indian Independence League, see Joginder Singh Jessy, "The Indian Army of Independence" (B.A. Thesis, University of Malaya, Singapore, 1958).





in June 1943. On October 21, 1943, Subhas Chandra Bose announced the formation of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind (Free India) which "is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Indian. ... We call upon the Indian people to rally round our banner and strike for India's freedom."<sup>21</sup> The Indian National Army<sup>22</sup> was reinforced and on October 25, 1943, war on Great Britain and the United States was declared by the Provisional Government. These moves were backed by the Japanese who promised "every possible co-operation and support in the Provisional Government's efforts to attain its object: Complete Independence of India."<sup>23</sup> The Indian National Army was later

<sup>21</sup> Bhulabhai J. Desai, Indian National Army Defence (Delhi: 1946), 176; as quoted in L. C. Green, "The Indian National Army Trials", Modern Law Review, 2, 1 (January 1948), 47.

<sup>22</sup> There were about 70,000 Indian troops in Malaya at the outbreak of the Japanese invasion. Before the fall of Singapore on February 15, 1942, about 200 of them joined the Japanese campaign in the peninsula. Later the Indian troops were handed over to the Japanese as prisoners of war, who, under Mohan Singh, became the base of the Indian National Army which came into existence on September 1, 1942. After the arrest of Mohan Singh by the Japanese in December, leadership of the Army was taken over by Subhas Chandra Bose who arrived from Tokyo in June 1943. See L. C. Green, ibid., 47-48; Kalyan Kumar Ghosh, "The Indian National Army - Motives, Problems and Significance", Asian Studies, 7, 1 (April 1969), 4-30; Joyce Lebra, "Japanese Policy and the Indian National Army", Asian Studies, 7, 1 (April 1969), 31-49; C. Kondapi, Indians Overseas: 1838-1949 (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1951), 178ff; Sinnappah Arasaratnam, Indians in Malaysia and Singapore (London: Oxford University Press, 1970); and Kernial Singh Sandhu, op. cit..

<sup>23</sup> Jai Hind: the Diary of a Rebel Daughter of India (Bombay: 1945), 69; as quoted in L. C. Green, ibid., 47-48.



renamed as Free India Army (Azad Hind Fauj). Among the members of the Army, about 20 thousand men were recruited from Indian prisoners-of-war in Malaya and 30 thousand from among the laborers, mostly Tamils.<sup>24</sup> Throughout the entire period of the Japanese occupation, agents of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind had been active in Malaya in raising funds and recruiting personnel from the Azad Hind Fauj<sup>25</sup> and these activities had been given every assistance from the Japanese including press and radio facilities.<sup>26</sup> As a result, the Japanese had, to an important extent, succeeded in turning the parochial attachment of the Indian community to their home villages into

<sup>24</sup>Most of the support came from the urban lower middle and middle class groups. The call to fight for India's freedom was not as appealing to the Indian coolies in the rubber estates partly because a large number of them had already been drafted to work on the Burma-Siam railroad and partly because they were, for the most part, not exposed to the influence of Japanese propaganda due to their rural remoteness and their parochial outlook and low literacy. See Usha Mahajani, op. cit., 145ff; and Kalyan Kumar Ghosh, op. cit., 4-30.

<sup>25</sup>Every member of the Indian Independence League was asked to take the oath of allegiance to the Provisional Government. Addressing the Indian merchants in Malaya, Subhas Chandra Bose declared: Your lives and properties do not now belong to you. They belong to India and India alone. If you are not ready to pay the price of independence, you have only one course before you [changing nationality]. But remember this. When the war is over, you shall have no room in India. ... Everyone who refuses to help our cause is also our enemy because we are engaged in a life and death struggle." As quoted in Usha Mahajani, op. cit., 149-150. See also L. C. Green, op. cit., 68-69.

<sup>26</sup>It should be noted that like other communities, the Indian population in Malaya had been subjected to the same severe economic difficulties during the Occupation and many Indian laborers died in building the "death railroad" (the Burma-Siamese railroad); but on the whole, "the Japanese were careful not to control or exploit the Indians as they did ... the Chinese." Lee Ting Hui, "Singapore under the Japanese ...", op. cit., 63.





a conscious patriotic affection for the Indian nation. As one observer puts it,

The whole situation caused a complete change of outlook in [Indian] lives. For the first time Indians in Malaya came closer to their motherland and proved that they could be of service even if it came to sacrificing their lives.<sup>27</sup>

In all parts of Malaysia, it was the Chinese who had suffered the worst of the Japanese atrocities and it was they who had provided almost all of the anti-Japanese resistance forces. In the 1930's, when the Japanese began to invade China's Manchuria, Chinese patriotism had been stimulated through the use of nationalistic textbooks in the Chinese vernacular schools and the Anti-Japanese and National Salvation campaign organized by the leading members of the Chinese community and the Anti-Enemy-Backing-Up Society associated with the Malayan Communist Party (MCP). A boycott of Japanese goods was launched with considerable success.<sup>28</sup> Both the China Distress Relief Fund and the Patriotic War Fund for British war effort in Europe had received generous and spontaneous support from the Malayan Chinese. Almost all kinds of social and

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<sup>27</sup>H. I. S. Kanwar, "India's Link to Malaya", United Asia, 2 (June 1950), 425; and idem, "Indians in Malaya", Eastern World, December 1952, 14-16, and January 1953, 19. See also R. Hatley, "The Overseas Indian in Southeast Asia: Burma, Malaysia and Singapore", in Robert O. Tilman (ed.), Man, State and Society in Contemporary Southeast Asia (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), 460, 465.

<sup>28</sup>See Victor Purcell, The Chinese in Southeast Asia (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 138, 293, 302; and Yoji Akashi, The Nanyang Chinese Anti-Japanese National Salvation Movement . . ., op. cit.





and cultural entertainment that could raise funds for China's resistance war had been tried by the Chinese community. During the same period, the Japanese invasion of China had become the central focus of Chinese mass media in Malaya, and popular songs, dramas, and movies had been fashioned on a theme designed to stir up anti-Japanese feeling and love for China. All this had exercised a tremendous socializing effect on the outlook of the Chinese population.

When the Japanese attacked Malaya, "everything the Chinese community could do to assist the British cause they did."<sup>29</sup> In the last week of December 1941, Tan Kah Kee, a leading member of the Chinese community, formed the Chinese Mobilization Committee to recruit Chinese manpower to defend Malaya. When the Japanese forces landed in Singapore, this newly formed and ill-armed Chinese force "fought with courage and suffered many casualties."<sup>30</sup> Due to their anti-Japanese activities, the Chinese were regarded by the invaders as their implacable enemies, many of whom would have to pay with their lives and properties for their hostility toward the Japanese invasion.

Japanese actions against the Chinese in Malaya assumed the

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<sup>29</sup>Victor Purcell, The Chinese in Southeast Asia, op. cit., 305. Purcell observed that "apart from their contribution to the passive defence and other services, there are numerous stories of the assistance given by Chinese squatters and coolies to British troops at the risk of their lives; there was never a case of a European refugee asking for help in the shape of food or money or active support and being refused it."

<sup>30</sup>Victor Purcell, loc. cit.. See also F. Spencer Chapman, op. cit., 160.



character of ruthless persecution and massacre. In the first months of Japanese rule, tens of thousands of Chinese civilians suspected of hostility against the Japanese were either brutally tortured in the so-called Sook-Ching (Purification by Elimination) mopping-up parades<sup>31</sup> or shot en masse.<sup>32</sup> This type of persecution was frequently repeated throughout the entire period of the Japanese occupation. On top of all this, many Chinese women were molested and children killed at pleasure by the Japanese soldiers.

After the first massacre, at the insistence of the Japanese, the Overseas Chinese Association was formed to facilitate their exploitation and control of the Chinese population. The first Japanese demand was a "gift" of 50 million Malayan dollars from the Chinese community. Many people were forced to sell or mortgage their belongings

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<sup>31</sup>See N. I. Low and H. M. Cheng, op. cit., 18ff. Japanese tortures took many forms. One of them frequently used was the "water treatment". Water was pumped into a man until his entire body was saturated. Heavy weights were then placed on him until the water forced its way out of every orifice, including his pores.

<sup>32</sup>The following categories of the Chinese population were the targets of Japanese persecution: 1. anyone who had anything to do with the China Distress Relief Fund; 2. rich men; 3. Tan Kah Kee's followers; 4. newspaper men, schoolteachers, and high school students; 5. Hainanese; 6. newcomers to Malaya; 7. men with tattoo-marks; 8. members of the resistance forces; and 9. government servants and men such as justices of the peace and members of the legislative councils, etc.. See Victor Purcell, The Chinese in Southeast Asia, op. cit., 306. Massacred bodies were usually thrown into the sea or buried in mass graves. In the early 1960's, a number of such graves were found in Singapore and the issue of reparation was raised again.





to pay for the fund while others were killed or detained because of their inability to make enough contributions.<sup>33</sup> The Overseas Chinese Association was also used by the Japanese as a means to direct the loyalty of the Chinese community to the pro-Japanese Wang Ching-wei regime in Nanking. Meanwhile, many normal economic activities of the Chinese community came to a standstill because tin-mining equipment and rubber processing plants had been heavily damaged during the British withdrawal and Malaya had been cut off from the world market. This was followed by severe shortage of imported foodstuffs, especially rice. As many Chinese were urban dwellers, they were very badly hit by this new situation. As a result, a large number of the urban Chinese moved out to take refuge on the fringe of the jungle where they hoped to grow food for themselves and to receive less Japanese attention. This resettlement resulted in strengthening the supply bases of the Chinese resistance forces. It also created the "squatter problem" after the War.

Chinese resistance to Japanese rule in Malaya took many forms, including the organization of armed groups in the jungle to make attacks on Japanese forces, installations and communications. These guerrilla forces took the name Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army

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<sup>33</sup> See Y. S. Tan, "History of the Formation of the Overseas Chinese Association and the Extortion by J.M.A. of \$50,000,000 Military Contribution from the Chinese in Malaya", Journal of the South Seas Society, 3, pt. 1 (September 1946), 1-12; and Nanyang Siang Pau (ed.), Nanyang nien-chien 1951 (Singapore: Nanyang-Pao She Co., 1951), Chapter 6.



(MPAJA) directed by the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Union (MPAJU) which was controlled by the Malayan Communist Party (MCP).<sup>34</sup> There were also underground organizations whose members lived openly in the towns and villages and who provided material and manpower support to the guerrilla forces. In 1944, the Kuomintang also established a small guerrilla group at the Siamese border. The MPAJA was divided into state groupings to carry out harassing activities against the Japanese. The guerrillas enjoyed popular support from the Chinese population and in some areas they were greatly assisted by the aborigines.<sup>35</sup> Facing the Chinese armed resistance, the Japanese intensified their suppression and persecution of the Chinese community, and this, in turn, forced more Chinese to join the guerrilla movement.

The declared objective of the MCP and its MPAJA was to "drive the Japanese Fascists out of Malaya and establish the Malayan Republic."<sup>36</sup> Although the members of the MCP and the guerrilla forces

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<sup>34</sup>For a brief account of the organization and activities of the MPAJA, see Hai Shang-ou, ma-lai-a jin-min kan-jih chun (The Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army), (Singapore: Hua Ch'iao Ch'u-pa She, 1945). See also Lucian W. Pye, Guerrilla Communism in Malaya: Its Social and Political Meaning (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1956), 62-69; and Victor Purcell, Malaya: Communist or Free? (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1954), 45ff.

<sup>35</sup>See Victor Purcell, The Chinese in Malaya, op. cit., 259. See also Alun Jones, "The Orang Asli: An Outline of Their Progress in Modern Malaya", Journal of Southeast Asian History, 9, 2 (September 1968), 286-305.

<sup>36</sup>In the 1943 session, the Central Executive Committee of the MCP passed a 9-point anti-Japanese program which may be summed up as follows:





were predominantly Chinese, they had consistently emphasized in their official policies the importance of communal harmony among the races. During the War, the MPAJA was popularly known as the Tiga Bintang (Three Stars) which signified the three main communities in Malaya. Such an emphasis was also expressed in the composition of all its committees and other structures where an outlook of multiracial leadership had been maintained. This was particularly so in the case of the post-war trade union and mass organizations, and san ta min-tzu ta tuan-che (unity of the three great races) remained as the official slogan of the MCP after the War.<sup>37</sup> To the general Malay public, however, the MCP and the MPAJA were seen as an exclusively Chinese movement both in their composition and their sentiment, and as a great threat to Malay culture and political status.<sup>38</sup>

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1. to drive the "Japanese Fascists" out of Malaya and to establish a republic; 2. to establish a government with representation from all the nationalities, improve living conditions, and develop industry, agriculture and commerce; 3. to give freedom of speech, association, press, and thought; 4. increase wages, abolish high taxation and money-lending at high interest; 5. reorganize the guerrillas into a National Defence Army; 6. establish free education in the several languages and develop Malayan National Culture; 7. confiscate Fascist property and restore property confiscated by the Japanese; 8. practise tariff autonomy; and 9. combine with the Soviet Union and China to free the oppressed people of the East. For full text, see Victor Purcell, The Chinese in Malaya, op. cit., 261.

<sup>37</sup>See Ian Morrison, "Aspects of the Racial Problem in Malaya", Pacific Affairs, 22 (September 1949), 247.

<sup>38</sup>In an interview regarding the Chinese guerrillas, one Malay stated: "This is our land and the Chinese want it. They speak nicely but they speak only with their mouths. In their hearts they will not





The far-reaching impacts of the three and a half years' Japanese occupation on communal relations in Malaya can now be assessed. First, the Japanese invasion meant different things to different communities and each community responded to it differently according to its own perception and experience of the crisis. On the part of the Malay community, the crisis amounted to little more than a change of its protector. The sultans and the ruling bureaucrats "tended to cooperate with their new overlords, much as they had with the British, and were rewarded with preferential treatment."<sup>39</sup> The Malay masses, wherever their sympathy lay, remained submissive followers of their rulers and many did so because of the alleged fear of possible Chinese domination. For those Malays who actively collaborated with the Japanese, their motives were purely communal as they "thought only in terms of the possible restoration of Malay political supremacy in the country"<sup>40</sup> and the establishment of a Melayu Raya in which the immigrant non-Malay communities would be reduced to an insignificant position. This attitude was quite understandable. It would seem that there was no reason to believe that the Malays should

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be satisfied until they have us completely in their power." See Kenelm O. L. Burridge, op. cit., 247.

<sup>39</sup>Norton Ginsburg and Chester F. Roberts, Jr., op. cit., 441.

<sup>40</sup>K. J. Ratnam, Communalism and the Political Process in Malaya (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1965), 19.



have preferred, and fought for, the British, since, on paper, the Japanese had promised them more. In the face of Japanese offers and a growing organized Chinese political force, it would appear natural that thinking in terms of communal interests, the Malays had allied themselves with the Japanese rather than with the Chinese resistance movement. "[T]here was no reason why the Malays should risk their necks defending urban economic interests whose prosperity they had never shared."<sup>41</sup>

On the other hand, the non-Malay communities had a different perception of the crisis of the Japanese invasion. During Japanese rule, the Indian community had been subject to the influence of Indian nationalism. Although Japanese support for the Indian movement was motivated by their desire to utilize Indian patriotic fervor for the imperialistic purposes of the Japanese authorities, the Indian community as a whole tended to look upon the Japanese as potential liberators of India rather than their enemies. It was true that some members of the MPAJA and the MCP were Indians but there were no Indian organized resistance forces. Under the influence and leadership of Subhas Chandra Bose and Rash Behari Bose, the leading members of the Indian community had been recruited into the Indian Independence League and provided at least symbolic support, if not active collaboration, to the

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<sup>41</sup> Emily Sadka, "Constitutional Change in Malaya: A Historical Perspective", Australian Outlook, 2, 3 (September 1957), 22.





cause of India's liberation.

As a sharp contrast, it was the Chinese community (whose loyalty to Malaya had been doubted by both the British and the Malays in the pre-war years) which stood almost alone to fight its own war against the Japanese. It can be argued that Chinese resistance was prompted not by their love for Malaya but by their loyalty toward China. While this was true with respect to the growth of anti-Japanese fervor among the Malayan Chinese before the actual Japanese invasion took place,<sup>42</sup> during the Japanese occupation, many members of the MPAJA were in fact fighting for the survival of their kith and kin in Malaya and the restoration of a peaceful order, rather than risking their life for China and the cause of proletarian revolution. This fact seemed to account for the failure of the Communists to organize a mass resistance against the return of the British immediately after the War. Therefore, it would be equally valid to assert that the Chinese resistance movement was a manifestation of a growing sense of attachment and identification among the domiciled Chinese with Malaya. As Emily Sadka points out,

the Japanese sought to subject all  
the races of Malaya to permanent  
spiritual and material servitude ...  
in resisting them the Chinese were  
acting in the common interest. For

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<sup>42</sup>It should be noted that before the War the Chinese community had given equal and enthusiastic support to the Patriotic War Fund for British war effort in Europe.



once a Chinese patriotism and a Malayan patriotism were genuinely consistent with each other.<sup>43</sup>

In short, the whole Chinese community had been hostile to the Japanese regardless of whether the invaders had been seen as the enemies of China or of Malaya. There were, of course, Chinese collaborators; but on the whole "Outwardly there was compliance ...; inwardly there was an ever-growing hatred."<sup>44</sup>

Second, the Japanese occupation had further strengthened the internal solidarity of each of the three major communities and produced new obstacles to the development of a common identification and outlook among them. The politicization of the idea of a Melayu Rayu by the Japanese and the KMM crystallized Malay communalism into a sharp sense of identification with a pan-Malay race. Japanese pro-Malay policy and their recognition of Malay political culture as part of the ruling element in Malayan politics during the Occupation had reaffirmed pre-war Malay attitude that Malaya was a Malay state and, as the rightful owners of the country, the Malays were entitled ipso facto to a dominant position in its political life. As regards the Indian community, identification with the Indian nation was awakened

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<sup>43</sup>Emily Sadka, op. cit., 22.

<sup>44</sup>Victor Purcell, The Chinese in Malaya, op. cit., 255. See also Lee Ting Hui, "Singapore under the Japanese ...", op. cit., 57; and Yoji Akashi, "Japanese Policy toward the Malayan Chinese 1941-1945", op. cit., 61-89.



and this had produced a certain unifying effect among the diverse elements of the Indian population.

The Chinese community, on the other hand, had experienced a common suffering at the hands of a common enemy. Whether young or old, rich or poor, Chinese-educated or English-educated, Cantonese or Hokkien, Hakka or Teochew, all Chinese had shared the same fate and become potential victims of Japanese atrocities during the War. This common experience tended to generate a common bond among the Chinese and the traditional division between clans or dialect groups seemed to have lost much of its social significance during the Japanese occupation. Furthermore, the fact that the British had given up their responsibility to defend Malaya engendered much bitterness among the Chinese. Left alone to fight the resistance war, the Chinese could find support and sympathy mostly among their own fellow-racials. This situation had greatly reinforced their long-standing experience that they had been hai-wai ku-erh residing in a hostile environment in which the only effective way to defend their interests was for them to get together in a common united front and, if all means of redress were denied them, to resort to self-defence in the form of secret societies or underground activities.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>This is very much a part of traditional Chinese political culture. The ancient Chinese wang-tao theory of state held that if a ruler turned a deaf ear to people's grievances and stopped practising virtuous and just rule, the rivers would flood, the mountain shake, and the people revolt. Following this tradition, one of the four





Third, the Japanese occupation had seen a progressive deterioration of Chinese-Malay relations. Malay collaboration with the Japanese had greatly embittered the Chinese and deepened Chinese resentment. Rewarded with preferential treatment, the Malays called the Chinese troublemakers and charged that the Chinese guerrillas were attempting to take over the government and make Malaya a province of China. In response, the Chinese tended to see the Malays as traitors who had betrayed the Malayan nation by sympathizing with and aiding the invaders in an attempt to liquidate the Chinese - the champions of national honor and integrity. Under the direction and encouragement of the Japanese, Malay (and some Indian) units had launched regular attacks on the MPAJA and Malay police had either taken part directly or assisted the Japanese Kempeitai (secret police) in browbeating and torturing Chinese prisoners and civilians. In retaliation, Malay military units, police forces and informants had also become the targets

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greatest Chinese popular novels, Sui Hu Chuan (Water Margin, translated by Pearl Buck under the title All Men Are Brothers) described 108 people's heroes who, oppressed by the officials of the Sung Dynasty (960-1279), were forced to go up to Mountain Lian to rebel against the state. During the last several hundred years, Sui Hu Chuan has been one of the most popular readers not only among the educated Chinese but also among the peasants through the mouths of story-tellers and vernacular dramas into which the stories of the 108 heroes have been formed. Today, pei pi shang Lian-Shan (forced to go up to Mountain Lian) has become a popular Chinese phrase to describe a desperate political situation in which the oppressed are forced to revolt. Chinese revolutionaries in the last hundred years or so had been influenced by Sui Hu Chuan. Men like Sun Yat-sen and Mao Tsetung began their revolutions by associating with underground organizations and activities. See Robert Ruhlmann, "Traditional Heroes in Chinese Popular Fiction" in Arthur F. Wright (ed.), The Confucian Persuasion (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960), 148ff.



of Chinese guerrilla attack. As a result, the resistance and counter-resistance movement during the Japanese occupation had, in effect, become a sort of communal war.<sup>46</sup>

Before the Second World War, the Chinese population in Malaya was not an organized political force; but this situation was changed by the Japanese invasion. During the occupation, the largely Chinese MPAJA and MCP had become not only highly organized but also armed with weapons. True, the guerrillas and their organizations were in theory multiracial and officially adhered to the principle of san ta min-tzu tuan-che; but in the eyes of the Malays, they were believed to be an alien movement manned by the aliens, motivated by alien interests and dominated by an alien ideology. As soon as Japanese rule came to an end in mid-August 1945, the guerrillas emerged from the jungle and gained control of a number of towns and cities before

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<sup>46</sup>"... the police were not popular as they would have had to carry out Japanese orders necessarily severe in the circumstances of occupation. ... When ... the Malay element was encouraged to browbeat the Chinese and ... to assault and assist in the torture of Chinese prisoners, 'friend mata-mata' became enemy No. 2. ... in isolated districts individual members of the Force dared not show themselves out of doors, while whole station had often to barricade themselves in ...". See R. Onraet, "Malayan Impression", British Malaya, 20, 8 (December 1945), 238-239. Malay informants were also the targets of guerrilla attack. Hatred against Malay informants was well illustrated in the following report: During the occupation a guerrilla school was established in the mountains northeast of Slim, where Captain Quayle was one of the instructors. "A Malay finally guided the Japanese to the camp. There was a brisk action, but all the Chinese escaped. Later they returned to the cave. Two days later the Malay came to see whether the Chinese were still here. He was wounded by a Chinese outpost, brought in, and placed on the parade ground. There a young girl follower of the guerrilla fighters seized Captain Quayle's jungle-knife and stabbed him to death." See The Times (London), September 24, 1945.





the return of the British. Under the instigation of the Japanese and some Indonesian immigrants, Malay masses in Johore, Negri Sembilan, Perak and Pahang launched indiscriminate attacks on the Chinese population. "In all these cases the Malays were the aggressors",<sup>47</sup> and in Johore alone, where the massacre took place between Batu Pahat and Muar, several hundred Chinese were killed by Malay parang (long jungle-knife) or burnt to ashes with their houses, and many of the victims were women and children.<sup>48</sup> The massacre was referred to by the Chinese as pai-hua (expelling the Chinese by killing), a term pointing out the focus of Chinese fear in post-war Malaya.

Although government and community leaders in the post-war years continued to treat the racial clashes in 1945 as a forbidden

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<sup>47</sup>Victor Purcell, The Chinese in Malaya, op. cit., 269. There has been a tendency among many writers on Malayan politics to assume that the MPAJA and the MCP were directly and actively involved in the racial clashes at the end of the War. This view seems to be uninformed, although it was true that the Malay population might have been provoked by the victorious MPAJA. The fact that the vast majority of the casualties in all clashes were Chinese seems to indicate that the armed guerrillas were not actively involved. Among all the clashes, the MPAJA intervened only in Perak to put an end to the killing. In Johore, the massacre took place in the areas between Batu Pahat and Muar. (At that time, the author was nine years old, living in an area only 15 miles away from the troubled spot, and can still recall the horrible atmosphere of those dreadful days). Throughout the violent conflict, the MPAJA had refused to meddle in favor of the Chinese on the ground that "the three great races" should be united rather than fighting one another and that if they intervened, the clashes would be widened. They blamed the Japanese for causing the conflict and adopted a sitting-on-the-fence attitude. Such a policy caused a serious loss to the popularity of the MPAJA among the Chinese population.

<sup>48</sup>For a study of the Johore massacre based on the Malay point of view, see Kenelm O. L. Burridge, op. cit., 151-168.



topic in public discussion, the crises had undoubtedly implanted in the minds of the two conflicting communities a lasting sense of mutual fear, distrust, rejection and hatred. The fact that the Malay attackers were not punished for their crime had deepened Chinese bitterness and resentment. After the racial violent outburst in 1945, the fear of pai-hua had been ever-present in the thought of the Chinese who subjectively tended to regard the Malays as being violence-prone. This fear produced a mixed impact on the Chinese community. The majority of the Chinese masses experienced a sense of helplessness and felt that they were in Malaya on sufferance. Such an attitude gave rise to a sense of political incompetence, a sense of inability to change the status quo without the risk of pai-hua, which, in turn, produced general political apathy and ineptitude among the Chinese population. Some Chinese, on the other hand, came to believe in the violent overthrow of the status quo as a means to establish a just and equal society in Malaya.<sup>49</sup> To the Malays, however, the Japanese occupation appeared to have convinced them that "Malay political dominance could be achieved and maintained without much difficulty or complication" because "Japanese administration had been carried out without Chinese support, with the Malays as the chief local participants."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>The revolutionaries also preached communal harmony but they held that as soon as the British imperialists, Malay sultans, Chinese capitalists and Indian money-lenders were out of the way, an era of fraternal interracial concord would dawn. See Ian Morrison, op. cit., 247.

<sup>50</sup>K. J. Ratnam, op. cit., 18-19.





As the 1945 pai-hua incident seemed to indicate that the Chinese could be browbeaten to submission, violent means might have appeared to the extremist section of the Malay community as one of the attractive short-cuts to Malay domination.<sup>51</sup>

Finally, the Japanese occupation had also produced a number of important changes affecting the non-Malay communities. In the first place, communications between the non-Malays in Malaya and their home countries during the years of occupation had been completely cut off, and this isolation reinforced their pre-war tendency toward permanent settlement in Malaya. This trend was especially marked with respect to the Chinese community. The heavy influx of Chinese females and

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<sup>51</sup>Such means were favored by the Malays in the kampong in which Peter J. Wilson had done field work for his book. Wilson reported: "Contemporary notions about the island [Singapore] were shaped by the report of relatives living there who come to the village [in which Wilson did his research] to attend a wedding. ... villagers regard [Singapore] as belonging to the Malays. The visitors expounded to a gathering of villagers on life in Singapore, depicting themselves as being a minority oppressed and discriminated against, forced to live in the poorest parts of the island and the city, unable to gain access to good housing, welfare, and other benefits, and steadily economically strangled by the Chinese. One man ... proceeded to lurid tales of the violence of the Chinese and of their sexual depravity, and told how neither he nor any Malay ever walked abroad without being armed and would go out at night only in groups. It was impossible for a Malay to set up store in Singapore, because the Chinese would simply rob the store bare. The only solution, the speaker went on, was either the expulsion or the slaughter of the Chinese, and he personally favored the latter course. The hatred of the Chinese that he evidenced was echoed by other members of his family, and the violent course he advocated was looked on with approval by his audience." A Malay Village and Malaysia (New Haven: Hraf Press, 1967), 49-50. The report of the visitors from Singapore is certainly false; but the villagers' acceptance of their views and means is bound to have serious political consequences.





the restriction on male immigration in the 1930's had increased the number of Chinese women from 486 in 1931 to 815 in 1947 for every thousand Chinese men. At the same time, the percentage of Malaya-born Chinese had also increased from 29.9 in 1931 to 63.5 in 1947 (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1  
Chinese - Sex Ratio and Malaya-Born

Year	Females per 1,000 Males	Malaya-Born
1911	215	-
1921	371	20.9%
1931	486	29.9
1947	817	63.5
1957	926	74.5
1967	964	85.2

Sources: (1) Figures for 1911-47 obtained from M. V. del Tufo, A Report on the 1947 Census of Population, Malaya, Comprising the Federation of Malaya and the Colony of Singapore (Kuala Lumpur: Government Printer, 1949), 57-58. (2) Sex ratio and percentage for Malaya-Born for 1957 were derived from H. Fell, 1957 Population Census of the Federation of Malaya (Kuala Lumpur: Department of Statistics, 1960), Report I, 1 and each State Report. (3) Sex ratio and percentage of Malaya-born for 1967 were computed from the estimated population as at 31st December 1966 in Annual Bulletin of Statistics Malaysia 1967 (Kuala Lumpur: Department of Statistics, 1967), 1-6.

Similar trends also occurred in the Indian community (Table 4.2). No doubt, these demographic changes, coupled with the loss of contact with members of families and relatives in China and India, helped to produce a stabilizing effect on the Chinese and Indian communities.



Table 4.2  
Indians - Sex Ratio and Malaya-Born

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Year	Females per 1,000 Males	Malaya-Born
1911	320	-
1921	424	12.1%
1931	514	21.4
1947	687	51.6
1957	746	64.5
1967	836	79.7

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Sources: (1) 1911-47 sex ratio and percentage of Malaya-Born were obtained from M. V. del Tufo, A Report on the 1947 Census of Population, Malaya, Comprising the Federation of Malaya and the Colony of Singapore (Kuala Lumpur: Government Printer, 1949), 57-58. (2) Sex ratio and percentage of Malaya-Born for 1957 were derived from H. Fell, 1957 Population Census of the Federation of Malaya (Kuala Lumpur: Department of Statistics, 1960), Report I, 1, and each State Report. (3) 1967 sex ratio and percentage of Malaya-Born were estimated figures based on the estimated population as at 31st December, 1966 in Annual Bulletin of Statistics Malaysia 1967 (Kuala Lumpur: Department of Statistics, 1967), 1-6.

In the second place, fear of the Japanese intensified the movement of urban Chinese to countryside, which had first begun with the pre-war great depression. The movement resulted in the resettlement of about half a million Chinese in the rural areas where they built their own huts or houses and engaged in cultivating land and raising cattle. These farmers were, undoubtedly, a more settled community than those Chinese who were mere coolies or shopkeepers of

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Chinese towkay (rich men) and lived in the kongsi (coolie houses) provided by their employers. Most importantly, the resettlement brought the Chinese physically closer to the Malays. Before the Emergency, Malay kampong and Chinese rural settlements existed side by side and this physical proximity provided numerous opportunities for intercommunal contact beyond the usual functional necessity.<sup>52</sup>

In the third place, in their campaign against the Japanese, the MPAJA, and its dominant component, the MCP, had placed great emphasis on the fact that the "three great races" were the owners of Malaya and their unity was essential for the realization of a peaceful, independent, democratic, equal and prosperous Malaya. The 3-star MPAJA flag and the red-flag song were symbolic of this approach.

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<sup>52</sup>One British administrator, O. W. Wolters, observed that "The total effect of the years of the occupation may be summarized as the isolation of the rural Chinese from other racial communities in Malaya, the strengthening of specifically Chinese attitudes of mind and the consciousness of being 'Overseas' Chinese ..." (see his "Emergency Resettlement and Community Development in Malaya", Community Development Bulletin, December 1951, 3). As a British official in Malaya, Wolters should be supposed to be familiar with the Malayan situation but his observation that the resettlement of the Chinese in the rural areas during the Japanese occupation had resulted in an isolation of the Chinese community from other racial groups (see also ibid., 2) is incomprehensible. As a matter of fact, contrary to Wolters' belief, intercommunal contact between the Chinese and the Malays had increased noticeably as a result of the movement of the Chinese from the urban to the rural areas. It was true that in some areas the Malays were not happy about the Chinese practice of pig-raising but in general there had been a gradual development of personal contacts between the two communities. For example, it was not uncommon that Chinese were invited to attend Malay wedding ceremonies and there were exchanges of visits, gifts and cakes during festivals. Furthermore, the fact that rural Chinese could speak Malay more fluently than their urban counterparts indicated that they were not completely isolated from the Malay community.



The politicization of these Malayan concepts among the Chinese youths tended to encourage the articulation of a consciousness oriented to Malaya as a whole rather than to China.<sup>53</sup> It should be pointed out, however, that although the political demands articulated by the MPAJA and the MCP were Malayan in outlook, the fact that they were formulated by the Communists had a lasting effect on Malay attitude. Right from the immediate post-war years up to the present, Chinese political demands have often been ignored or rejected outright by the Malay elites on the ground that they have been part of the Communist conspiracy or a manifestation of "Chinese chauvinism".<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>It would seem that during the years of Japanese rule, the only forces that stood for a Malayan Malaya were the MPAJA and the MPAJU. Although the Chinese resistance movement began with the growth of Chinese patriotism in the 1930's, one looked in vain for evidence of any plan or attempt on the part of the guerrilla and the MCP to make Malaya a province of China. On the contrary, the organizational and symbolic aspects of the movement were completely Malayan in outlook. Commenting on the return of the British to Malaya in 1945, the London Times wrote: "The leaders of the Anti-Japanese Union and Anti-Japanese Army think in terms of Malaya. The three stars of the Anti-Japanese Army flag symbolize the three main races of Malaya. During the past three years, it is the Chinese who have shown themselves to be the most vital of the three races. They have shown astonishing toughness of fibre and proved themselves to be the dominant element in the population." The Times (London), September 26, 1945. Emily Sadka (op. cit., 22) also stated that "Like resistance fighters everywhere, the Chinese felt that their struggle and suffering personalized the country's will to independence and that they were the protectors of society and the champions of national integrity."

<sup>54</sup>In reviewing Lea E. William's book on The Future of the Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), William E. Willmott writes: "Even the otherwise excellent study by Professor Williams is curiously myopic in this regard. He identifies as "chauvinistic" all left-wing movements ... in which Chinese participate, yet applauds





### The Malayan Union Crisis

The return of the British to Malaya in September 1945 began a period of the British Military Administration in Malaya until April 1, 1946 when it was replaced by the Malayan Union.<sup>55</sup> The two years after the entire Malayan Union proposals were first made known to the public in a British White Paper on January 22, 1946<sup>56</sup> opened "the first chapter in organized communal agitation ... in Malayan history."<sup>57</sup> During these two years, a political crisis of an unprecedented scale took place and led to the demise of the Malayan Union and its replacement by a pro-Malay Federation of Malaya on February 1,

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Chinese participation in the Alliance despite its avowedly communalistic organization and program. While the guerrilla force of the Emergency [and of the MPAJA as well] undoubtedly consisted almost entirely of Chinese, it would be a mistake to assume from that fact that it represented Chinese chauvinism. Quite the opposite; its aims were nationalist in the Malayan sense, and most of its adherents espoused an ideology that emphasized internationalism to a far greater extent than did those Chinese who supported British rule at the time." See "The Overseas Chinese Today and Tomorrow: A Review Article", Pacific Affairs, 42, 2 (Summer 1969), 211-212.

<sup>55</sup> British Military Administration was also established in the Borneo States but, in this case, it was replaced by the establishment of two Crown Colonies of Sarawak and North Borneo. Supra, 139.

<sup>56</sup> Great Britain, Colonial Office, Malayan Union and Singapore: A Statement of Policy on Future Constitution (London: H.M.S.O., 1946, Cmd. 6724). Hereafter to be cited as Cmd. 6724.

<sup>57</sup> K. J. Ratnam, op. cit., 43.





1948.<sup>58</sup> Although the pre-war years and the Japanese occupation had already seen the rapid growth of Malay communalism, it was the demise of the Malayan Union that had led to the consolidation of Malay communalism as the dominant political force in post-war Malaya and today's Malaysia.

The post-war political crisis in Malaya centered around two important issues: state-building and nation-building. State-building involved the problem of establishing a national central authority over the nine Malay sultanates and the three Straits Settlements, while nation-building was concerned with creating a national outlook and common identity overshadowing, or leading to the elimination of, the communal sub-orientations and cultures. In fact, the crisis could be seen as the continuation of the pre-war dispute between centralization and decentralization, and between the demand for special privileges and the call for equal treatment. The only difference was that the British had changed their attitude and become insistent on both centralization and equal treatment of all communities after their return to Malaya in 1945.

The statement outlined a new British policy toward Malaya was announced by the Colonial Secretary in the British House of Commons on October 10, 1945:

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<sup>58</sup> Great Britain, Colonial Office, Federation of Malaya: Summary of Revised Constitutional Proposals (London: H.M.S.O., 1947, Cmd. 7171). This document is, hereafter, to be cited as Cmd. 7171.



His Majesty's Government have given careful consideration to the future of Malaya and the need to promote a sense of unity and common citizenship which will develop the country's strength and capacity in due course for self-government within the British Commonwealth. Our policy will call for a constitutional union of Malaya and for the institution of Malayan citizenship which will give equal citizenship rights to those who claim Malaya to be their homeland. For these purposes fresh agreements will need to be arranged with the Malay State Rulers, and fresh constitutional measures for the Straits Settlement.<sup>59</sup>

In a separate circulated statement, the Colonial Secretary declared that the new Malayan Union would consist of the nine Malay states and the two Straits Settlements of Penang and Malacca. Singapore would be excluded in the new arrangement "in view of its special economic and other interests." He also declared that under the new constitutional order, qualifications for the Malayan Union citizenship would be "birth in Malaya or a suitable period of residence."<sup>60</sup>

Two days after the above announcement, Sir Harold MacMichael, the Special Representative of the British Government, arrived in Malaya, stating that he was "here to meet the Malay Rulers and discuss with

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<sup>59</sup>Great Britain, Parliament, House of Commons, Official Report of Debates, vol. 414, 1945-46, October 9-26, 254.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 256.





them the new policy for Malayan Union which had been decided upon in London."<sup>61</sup> MacMichael concluded his mission on December 21, and, on January 22, 1946, the first White Paper was issued in London giving details of the Malayan Union scheme. It was declared that Sir Harold MacMichael "has concluded Agreements with the Rulers of the Malay States whereby full powers of jurisdiction in their States are granted to His Majesty."<sup>62</sup> On April 1, 1946, the Malayan Union (comprising the nine Malay states and the two Straits Settlements of Penang and Malacca) was officially inaugurated in Kuala Lumpur with Sir Edward Gent as its first Governor.

The reasons for the formation of the Malayan Union and the way it was hurriedly brought about are still subjects of hot debate,<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>The Straits Times, October 13, 1945, 3.

<sup>62</sup>Great Britain, Parliament, House of Commons, Official Report of Debates, vol. 418, 1946-47, January 22-February 8, p. 58. See also Sir Harold MacMichael, Report on a Mission to Malaya, October 1945-January 1946 (London: H.M.S.O., Colonial No. 194).

<sup>63</sup>According to the traditional explanations, the Malayan Union scheme was introduced because of the following factors: (1) the advantages of simplified and centralized administration; (2) British recognition of the permanence of settlement of the Chinese and Indians; (3) British disillusionment with the Malays because of their collaboration with the Japanese; and (4) British desire to create a sense of Malayan-ness in preparation for the ultimate goal of granting self-government to Malaya. See James de V. Allen, The Malayan Union (Yale University: Southeast Asia Studies, Monograph Series No. 10, 1967), 8-13. Allen's account was based mainly on official sources and has been disputed by other historians. See, for example, M. R. Stenson, "The Malayan Union and Historians", Journal of Southeast Asian History, 10, 2 (September 1969), 344-354.



but two things are certain. First, the MacMichael Treaties had put an end to the individual existence of the nine Malay states. For the first time, the whole peninsula (except Singapore which was excluded mainly on communal considerations<sup>64</sup>) was united under a single centralized government headed by the Governor who was responsible only to the British Crown. All legislations including that touching the Muslim religion and Malay custom required the Governor's assent.<sup>65</sup> Despite British profession of the desire to lead Malaya toward self-government, Malaya was, in effect, turned into a Crown Colony ruled directly by the British under the Foreign Jurisdiction Act. This arrangement amounted to a complete volte-face of former British policy of indirect rule. Second, by opening the door of

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<sup>64</sup>It is generally agreed that the exclusion of Singapore was made to give the Malays in the Union a numerical superiority over the Chinese. See K. J. Ratnam, op. cit., 45.

<sup>65</sup>Under the Malayan Union scheme, all the nine Malay states and the Settlements of Penang and Malacca formed a union, with a central authority consisting of a Governor with Executive and Legislative Councils; each state and Settlement had a local Council, presided over by a Resident Commissioner, which had such powers of administration and subsidiary legislation delegated to it by the central authority as were appropriate to the purposes of local government. In each state there was a Malay Advisory Council appointed and presided over by the Ruler. It legislated on matters of the Muslim faith, but this legislation would require the Governor's assent. For this purpose, the Governor was advised by a Central Advisory Council of the Malay Rulers sitting under his chairmanship. It can be seen that under this provision, the traditional reserved power of the Malay rulers had been reduced to an insignificant proportion. See Great Britain, Colonial Office, Malayan Union and Singapore: Summary of Proposed Constitutional Arrangements (London: H.M.S.O., 1946, Cmd. 6749). See also Cmd. 7171, op. cit..





automatic citizenship to non-Malays born in Malaya or Singapore,<sup>66</sup> the Malayan Union plan had rejected the Malay claim of bumiputraisim. This also meant the end of Malay monopoly in the governing function of the political system since both the Malays and the non-Malays now belonged to a common political category, enjoying equal political rights.<sup>67</sup> In view of these two vital changes, the Malayan Union scheme was indeed a major step forward toward the goals of state-building and nation-building. On the one hand, it attempted to bring together the FMS, the UMS, Malacca and Penang into a territorial union under a single national authority, which would lead to the erosion of state particularism and local attachments. On the other, the rejection of bumi-putraisim (which was based purely on racial considerations) in favor of

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<sup>66</sup>The following persons would acquire Malayan Union citizenship: (1) Persons born in the territory of the Union or of Singapore; (2) Persons who at the date on which the Order in Council became operative had been ordinarily resident in those territories for ten years out of the preceding fifteen; and (3) it would be possible for persons born outside of these territories to acquire Union citizenship by naturalization after five years' ordinary residence in the Malayan Union or Singapore after giving evidence of good character, and an adequate knowledge of either Malay or English and taking an oath of allegiance to the Union (see Cmd. 6749, 9-10). Persons under (1) and (2) would acquire Union citizenship automatically. Here, no distinction between Malays and non-Malays was made, and citizenship could be given to Singapore residents though it was not a part of the Union.

<sup>67</sup>In his report, Sir Harold MacMichael wrote: "side by side with the Malays, those men and women of other races whose real loyalty is towards Malaya will be able to reap the reward of their loyalty, for Malayan Union citizenship will carry with it the qualification for public and administrative service in the Union. This will strengthen the Malays and the country." See Colonial No. 194, op. cit., app. I.





a common citizenship based on the principle of racial equality would tend to encourage the development of a sense of trust and confidence among the members of the different communities and strengthen their vertical ties with the common political community, since that central entity was not identified with the interests of any particular race. However, as it turned out, the Malayan Union was strangled at the very beginning and never fully established due to strong Malay opposition.<sup>68</sup>

By the time the Malayan Union was officially installed on April 1, 1946, a storm of Malay protest had already been stirred up throughout the whole peninsula. As a complete reversal of Malay practice in the pre-war years, Malay protest rallies and demonstrations became very common and even the women came out to lead processions and address public meetings. Malay agitation for the withdrawal of the Malayan Union scheme continued up to the summer of 1946.<sup>69</sup> Throughout

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<sup>68</sup> Despite the official inauguration of the Malayan Union on April 1, 1946, "Only parts of the scheme ... were implemented. It was not possible to establish the Legislative Council and State Councils for which provision had been made, and the Governor legislated for the Union, with the advice of an Advisory Council which, however, had no Malay members. The citizenship proposals were among those parts of the constitutional arrangements proposed which were not implemented." See David R. Rees-Williams (British Colonial Under-Secretary in 1948), "The Malayan Situation in 1948", in *idem*, Tan Cheng Lock, S. S. Awbery and F. W. Dalley, Three Reports on the Malayan Problem (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1949), 4.

<sup>69</sup> For an account of the striking Malay protest, see Ishak bin Tadin, "Dato' Onn and Malay Nationalism, 1946-1951", Journal of Southeast Asian History, 1, 1 (March 1960), 56-68; Victor Purcell, "A Malayan Union: The Proposed New Constitution", Pacific Affairs, 19 (March 1946), 20-40; G. Hawkins, "Reactions to the Malayan Union", Pacific



these widespread protests, Malay communal sentiment ran high and was well expressed by the following slogans written on banners or shouted at demonstrations: "Down with Equal Citizenship", "Malaya Belongs to the Malays", "Long Live the Sultans and Malay Rights", "Equal Citizenship Means Suicide for the Malays", "Hidup Bahasa! Hidup-lah Bangsa", and "We Will Fight for Our Rights and Country".<sup>70</sup> At the same time, a number of influential ex-British Malayan high officials and Civil Servants in England also came out to express their support of the Malay viewpoints, accusing the British government of betraying the Malay rulers and their subjects and of opening the door for Malaya to become a province of China.<sup>71</sup>

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Affairs, 19 (September 1946), 279-285; Joel de Croze, "The Problem of Malaya", Journal of the Indian Institute of International Affairs, 2 (July 1946), 53-57; Bisheshwar Prasad, "Union of Malaya", Journal of the Indian Institute of International Affairs, 2 (October 1946), 22-32; James de V. Allen, op. cit., 33-39; and David R. Rees-Williams, "The Constitutional Position in Malaya", Pacific Affairs, 20 (June 1947), 174-178. Rees-Williams was one of the two British MPs who came to Malaya on an official visit in May-June 1946. He wrote: "In every hamlet, village and town that we visited we were met by what appeared to be the whole population" (ibid., 174).

<sup>70</sup> See Utusan Melayu, December 22, 1945; L. D. Gammans (an MP who visited Malaya with Rees-Williams in 1946), "Crisis in Malaya", The Spectator, 176 (1946), 601; idem, "The Situation in Malaya", World Affairs, 2 (October 1948), 353-356; and Malay Mail, May 30, 1946.

<sup>71</sup> Their views were expressed mostly through their letters and memoranda to the London Times and the Colonial Office, their spokesmen in the British Parliament, and by writing articles to journals and periodicals. Among the letters published in the Times between October 1945 and May 1946, one was signed by 17 prominent ex-Malayan civil servants including two ex-Governors of the Straits Settlements and an ex-Chief Secretary of the FMS attacking the Malayan Union and characterizing





One of the most important developments during the Malay agitation for the repeal of the Malayan Union was the revival of the pre-war Malay associations and the establishment of a national Malay organization which the pre-war Malay associations had failed to do in 1939 and 1940.<sup>72</sup> In response to a call of Dato' Onn bin Ja'afar,<sup>73</sup> an All-Malay Congress was convened in Kuala Lumpur on March 1, 1946. Forty-one Malay associations attended the meeting and agreed to form the United Malays National Organization (UMNO)<sup>74</sup> to fight for Malay rights and to find ways and means to ward off what Dato' Onn called "the ignominy of racial extinction."<sup>75</sup> The Congress declared that the

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it as "an instrument for annexation". See The Times, April 16, 1946. For opinions expressed in the form of articles, see, for example, Sir Richard O. Winstedt, "Sharp Practice in Malaya", The Spectator, March 8, 1946, 237; L. D. Gammans, "Crisis in Malaya", op. cit.; S. Whittingham-Jones, "Malaya Betrayed", World Review, May 1946; and Sir Frank A. Swettenham, "Administration in the Malay States", British Malaya, 20, 7 (November 1945), 220-222. See also A. G. Morkill, "The Malayan Union", Asiatic Review, 42 (April 1946), 181-187.

<sup>72</sup>Supra, 177-179.

<sup>73</sup>At the time, Dato' Onn bin Ja'afar was the Mentri Besar (Chief Minister) of Johore. Onn's call was issued in his letter published in Majlis, January 24, 1946, in which he supported a statement made by the Malay paper, Warta Negara, on November 10, 1945. The Warta wrote: "Join and take part in associations as soon as possible if you love your grandchildren. Look at your people - what will befall them - they will be left far behind. There is no other remedy than to organize ourselves into associations through which we unite to face the danger."

<sup>74</sup>Dato' Onn first suggested that the new organization be named United Malay Organization but finally it was agreed that the word "National" should be added to indicate that the Malays were not merely a race but a nation. See Majlis, March 4, 1946.

<sup>75</sup>See Ishak bin Tadin, op. cit., 61.



MacMichael Treaties which amounted to an outright annexation of the Malay states by the British Crown were null and void as they were concluded in violation of British pre-war treaty obligations and the state constitutions of Johore and Kedah. It was also charged that none of the Treaties were obtained by fair means and at least in Kedah and Trengganu, overt threats of deposition were employed by the British negotiators. The common citizenship proposals were also rejected by the Congress as a major step toward "the wiping from existence of the Malay race along with their land and Rulers."<sup>76</sup> The British were urged to withdraw the Union scheme, to restore the pre-war status quo, and to conduct new investigations. When these proposals were rejected by the British government,<sup>77</sup> Dato' Onn called an emergency meeting of the All-Malay Congress on March 30, in which it was decided to ask all the Malays in the peninsula and the Straits Settlements to begin a

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<sup>76</sup> See UMNO Sa-Puloh Tahun 1946-1956 (Ten Years of UMNO 1946-1956, which is a documentary collection of the organization), (Penang: Daud Press, 1957), 16.

<sup>77</sup> On March 8, the question of the Malayan Union was debated in the British House of Commons. In reply to the opposition raised by Captain Gammans, Squadron-Leader Donner and others, the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies said: "The House should be under no illusion that the British Government must push on with the policy. We believe it to be right and in the best interest of Malaya. We want Malaya's co-operation, and we believe, in their [Malayan] interest, that this policy can further general prosperity and general happiness". See Great Britain, Parliament, House of Commons, Official Report of Debates, vol. 420, March 4-22, 1946, 727.





week of mourning starting from April 1 on which the Union was scheduled to be officially inaugurated. During that week, all Malays were asked to wear white cloth on their songkok (caps worn by Malay Muslims) as a sign of protest "against the forcible imposition of the Malay Union."<sup>78</sup> The April 1st inauguration ceremony was declared "the funeral rites of [Malay] birthright and liberty. ... any Malay taking part would be disowned."<sup>79</sup> By this time, all the Malay rulers had joined forces with their ra'ayat in denouncing the validity of the MacMichael Treaties<sup>80</sup> and in boycotting all the official functions of the Malay Union.

On May 11, 1946, the Pertubohan Kebangsaan Melayu Bersatu or United Malays National Organization (UMNO) officially came into existence in Johore Bahru with Dato' Onn bin Ja'afar elected

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<sup>78</sup>Dato' Onn's speech. Malay Mail, April 2, 1946.

<sup>79</sup>Dato' Onn's speech. Malay Mail, April 2, 1946.

<sup>80</sup>In their letters to Captain Gammans, the Malay sultans lodged their complaint that they were under intimidation when they signed the MacMichael Treaties. The sultan of Kedah, for example, wrote "I was presented with a verbal ultimatum with a time limit, and in the event of my refusing to sign the new agreement, which I call the Instrument of Surrender, a successor, who would sign it, would be appointed Sultan. Members of the State Council were compelled to sign an undertaking that they would advise me to sign it. I was told that this matter was personal and confidential, and was not allowed to tell my people what had taken place." The sultans of Johore, Selangor, Perak and Negri Sembilan lodged similar complaints. See The Straits Times, March 29, 1946, 2; and James de V. Allen, op. cit., 17-19.





as its first president. The establishment of the UMNO had given cohesion and efficiency to Malay demands for the repeal of the Union constitution. It confronted the British with an alliance of the three important forces in Malay society - the rulers, the aristocratic elites and the English-educated intelligentsia. As the Malay community was still dominated by a parochial-subject culture, the masses of the ra'ayat continued to look to their rulers and the elites for leadership and inspirations. Since Malay opposition to the Malayan Union had been centered around the sensitive issues of the status of the Malay race in its "homeland", the Muslim religion and the position and authority of the Malay rulers, it aroused in the Malays an interest in politics on an unexpected and totally unprecedented scale.<sup>81</sup> Acting as a united front of the conservative forces of the Malay community, the UMNO asked for the abrogation of the MacMichael Treaties as a precondition to the holding of any negotiations. An UMNO draft constitutional proposal was presented to the British with a demand that the latter negotiate with no other representatives except those of the UMNO and the Malay rulers.

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<sup>81</sup>As one writer observes, the communal agitation against the Malayan Union had transformed the Malays "from sleepy beneficiaries of a privileged position into champions of their own rights and critics of those who tried to destroy them." S. W. Jones, Public Administration in Malaya (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1953), 139.



After some initial and informal discussions in May-June 1946, the British agreed in July to establish an Anglo-Malay Constitutional Working Committee, comprising six senior British officials, four representatives of the rulers, and two of the UMNO, "to work out in detail fresh constitutional arrangements ... which would be acceptable to Malay opinion and which would provide a more efficient administration and form the basis of future political and constitutional developments."<sup>82</sup> The Committee concluded its work in November 1946, and its report was accepted by the British government before it was referred to a Consultative Committee so that "all interested communities" would have "full and free opportunity of expressing their views."<sup>83</sup> Following the publication of the report of the Consultative Committee in March 31, 1947,<sup>84</sup> the Working Committee was reconvened on

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<sup>82</sup> See Malayan Union, Constitutional Proposals for Malaya: Report of the Working Committee Appointed by a Conference of His Excellency the Governor of the Malayan Union, Their Highnesses the Rulers of the Malay States and the Representatives of the United Malays National Organization (Kuala Lumpur: Malayan Union Printing Office, 1946). Emphasis added.

<sup>83</sup> Statement of the Colonial Secretary in the British House of Commons; see Official Report of Debates, vol. 432, 228. The Consultative Committee was boycotted by the active public of the non-Malay communities which demanded direct negotiations with the British. Comprising officials, British businessmen and some conservative non-Malays who were appointed by the British and did not belong to any political groups, the Committee did not seem to offer an adequate channel of access for the non-Malay communities. See infra, note 103.

<sup>84</sup> Federation of Malaya, Constitutional Proposals for Malaya: Report of the Consultative Committee (Kuala Lumpur: Government Printing Office, 1947).





April 17 to discuss the recommendations of the Consultative Committee, and a revised draft constitution, incorporating some minor changes, was published on July 24.<sup>85</sup> After the proposed Federation of Malaya Agreement was signed by the Malay rulers on January 21, 1948, the new Federation, including the nine Malay states and the two Settlements of Malacca and Penang, officially came into being on February 1, 1948,<sup>86</sup> re-establishing Malaya as a Malay country.

The Malayan Union crisis involved a conflict between two different and opposite political demands arising from two different views concerning the basic nature of the state of Malaya and the emerging Malayan nation. On the British part, the Union "represented an honest endeavour ... to promote a broad-based citizenship irrespective of race or creed."<sup>87</sup> It could be seen as an act of realism for it gave recognition to the existence of a permanently multiracial society and its significance for the success of a capitalist economic system.<sup>88</sup> The

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<sup>85</sup> Federation of Malaya, Summary of Revised Constitutional Proposals Accepted by His Majesty's Government, 24th July, 1947 (Kuala Lumpur: Government Printing Office, 1947).

<sup>86</sup> Federation of Malaya, Federation of Malaya Agreement, 1948 (Kuala Lumpur: Government Printing Office, 1948).

<sup>87</sup> Tan Cheng Lock, "A Chinese View of Malaya", in David R. Rees-Williams, Tan Cheng Lock, S. S. Awbery and F. W. Dalley, op. cit., 19.

<sup>88</sup> In one study, Sir Edward Gent was accused of a lack of realism and the British Labour Party, of doctrinaire socialism. James de V. Allen, op. cit., 47, 48, 52. This accusation is not only unfair but inaccurate. In fact, given the existing trend toward self-determination



Malays, on the other hand, refused to acknowledge the fact that Malaya was a multi-racial country and saw in the Malayan Union scheme a fatal threat to their claim as being the owners of Malaya. In rejecting the Malayan Union, the Malays sought a re-establishment of the old order in which the national political community would be just the extension of the Malay community, while the non-Malays could be admitted to political rights only on the terms set by the owners of the country. The loss of the so-called sultans' sovereignty and the arbitrary and high-handed fashion in which the Union was brought about had also added fuel to the flame of Malay opposition.

Meanwhile, the active public of the non-Malay communities in the mid-1940's was politically too advanced to accept a scheme which had been characterized by it as "colonial" and "undemocratic".<sup>89</sup> Unlike

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and decolonization, and the British desire to continue their economic control in Malaya, it would seem that there was no alternative to the attempt to create a potentially independent multi-racial society.

<sup>89</sup>It should be remembered that immediately after the War, non-Malay political opinion was articulated almost exclusively by the Malayan Communist Party, its affiliated mass organizations and trade unions, and the left-wing political groups such as the Malayan Democratic Union (for a brief study on the Malayan Democratic Union, see Yeo Kim Wah, "A Study of Three Early Political Parties in Singapore, 1945-1955", Journal of Southeast Asian History, 10, 1 (March 1969), 117-127). The basis political demands of these groups were the immediate improvement of the economic life of the masses, the immediate end of colonial rule and the establishment of a self-governing republic. The Malayan Indian Congress, Tan Cheng Lock and other comparative moderates also demanded fully representative politics based upon universal suffrage. In view of this non-Malay political climate, the Malayan was bound to be opposed by the non-Malay leaders. See Study Group (ed.), Ma-lai-a min-tzu ying-tung chien-shih (A Brief History of the Malayan





the Malays who were more concerned with preserving their own privileged position than with self-government, the non-Malay leaders charged that the British had violated the principle of self-determination by imposing absolute colonial rule on Malaya. They demanded immediate self-government and an extensive grant of democratic political rights. Convinced that they belonged to the country as much as anyone else, the non-Malays took their political and citizenship status for granted and resented the fact that they themselves had not been consulted. When Sir Harold MacMichael arrived in Malaya in October 1945, one of the leading Chinese newspapers asked: "Why have the sultans been chosen as the persons with whom plans are to be made? The sultans represent only a small proportion of the Malays and have no claim at all to represent the Chinese."<sup>90</sup> The creation of a common citizenship was not greeted by the non-Malays with any particular enthusiasm either. On the one hand, they regarded the common citizenship offer as nothing more than their due. In fact, they expected many

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Nationalist Movement), (Singapore: Society of History and Geography, Nanyang University, 1962), 2-7. This book, written in Chinese, gives the first full account of post-war Malayan politics from the leftist point of view. It is available for research purposes in the banned books' section of the Library of Nanyang University in Singapore.

<sup>90</sup> Sin Chew Jit Poh, editorial, October 15, 1945. See also H. B. Lim (Secretary of the Malayan Democratic Union), "Malaya's 'Constitution'", Labour Monthly, 28, 12 (1946), 380-383. Lim referred to the representation of the constitutional crisis as a product of the violation of the sultans' sovereignty as "both factually and chronologically incorrect" for the rulers had long ceded their sovereignty to the British. He argued that the Malays and non-Malays alike had been antagonized by the fact that they had not been consulted.





more concessions than were contained in the Malayan Union scheme.<sup>91</sup>

On the other hand, they also argued that the new citizenship provision was little more than an empty promise because it was not accompanied by any specific grants of democratic political rights, such as self-government and free elections. The exclusion of Singapore from the Malayan Union was also bitterly opposed by the non-Malays. It was charged that the exclusion perpetuated the colonial policy of "divide and rule" which was inimical to the interests of the Malayan people.<sup>92</sup> In short, the non-Malay leaders felt that the Malayan Union proposals "do not touch the essence of the matter. That essence is democratic representation."<sup>93</sup>

It can thus be seen that the Malayan Union meant one thing to the Malay community and another to the non-Malay groups. The Malays demanded not only a return to the principle of Malay paramountcy but also the legitimization of the Malay community as being the "Malayan" nation. Accordingly, they emphasized that citizenship qualifications should be so arranged as to guarantee non-Malays' assimilation to "the country's way of life" and this assimilation was to be regarded as the

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<sup>91</sup>See Victor Purcell, The Chinese in Southeast Asia, op. cit., 322.

<sup>92</sup>Ma-lai-a min-tzu ying-tung chien-shih, op. cit., 4-5.

<sup>93</sup>Victor Purcell, "A Malayan Union: The Proposed New Constitution", op. cit., 38.



criterion of their undivided loyalty to the "Malayan" nation. As Malaya was not a uni-communal society, this demand on the part of the Malays was tantamount to a claim of racial hegemony. The demands of the non-Malays, on the other hand, were universalistic rather than particularistic, although they were put forward to advance their own interests. They asked for both political equality and democratic rights for all who could claim Malaya to be their permanent homeland.<sup>94</sup> These demands, however, proved unacceptable to both the Malays and the British. The former were mainly concerned with the perpetuation of their privileged position whereas the latter were not yet prepared to give extensive democratic rights to the various communities in Malaya.

It was noted earlier that in the immediate post-war period, the articulation structures of the non-Malay communities had been dominated by the left-wing political groups and the MCP. Under the leadership of the MCP and other left-wing activists, mass organizations in the form of trade unions,<sup>95</sup> people's associations and women's groups

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<sup>94</sup>Non-Malay spokesmen had repeatedly pointed out that in order to create a Malayan nation, equality of citizenship and political rights were important. For example, Tan Cheng Lock argued that "Experience has shown that whenever aliens are treated as citizens they become citizens, whatever may be their religion or their race." See his Malayan Problems from a Chinese Point of View (Singapore: Tanmsco, 1947), 118.

<sup>95</sup>In 1947, there were 289 trade unions of different sizes with a total membership of 199,220 in Malaya excluding Singapore. During the same year, there were 360 strikes and labor disputes involving a total of 69,217 workers. Strikes on rubber estates numbered 280 involving 46,282 employees. See David R. Rees-Williams, "The Malayan Situation





sprang up throughout Malaya and Singapore. During the period of the British Military Administration, demonstrations and strikes took place one after another, demanding the immediate improvement of the economic conditions of the masses.<sup>96</sup> In the face of this highly organized, MCP-led Chinese and Indian agitation, the British became alarmed and tended to interpret labor unrest "as an intolerable challenge to authority."<sup>97</sup> As a reversal of their post-war policy of permissive toleration of left-wing political activities, the British Military Administration arrested a number of the General Labour Union leaders and banished them to China in March 1946. This arrest marked the beginning of a shift in British thought.<sup>98</sup> It would seem that the events up to February 1946 might have convinced the British that it was not in their interest to grant citizenship rights to the "aliens". Concerned mainly with the rapid re-imposition of their administrative

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in 1948" in David R. Rees-Williams, Tang Cheng Lock, S. S. Awbery and F. W. Dalley, op. cit., 7-8.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 6. See also ma-lai-a min-tzu ying-tung chien-shih, op. cit., 3; and Charles Gamba, The Origins of Trade Unionism in Malaya (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 1962).

<sup>97</sup> M. R. Stenson, op. cit., 348; and idem, Repression and Revolt: The Origins of the 1948 Communist Insurrection in Malaya and Singapore (Athens, Ohio: Center for International Studies, Southeast Asia Series No. 10, 1969), 1-31.

<sup>98</sup> After February 1946, British official reports paid little attention to Chinese or Indian political opinion. Many such reports described non-Malay demands as being part of the Communist conspiracy and referred to the Chinese community as a whole as apathetic while regarding the Indians as unimportant. See M. R. Stenson, "Malayan Union ...", op. cit., 349.



authority, the British were, at this time, prepared to advocate any solution which would bring about immediate political order and stability. On the one hand, since the Malayan Union was boycotted by the Malays and attacked as undemocratic by the Chinese and Indians, it did not appear to offer any prospect of political peace. On the other, the demands of the non-Malays were too radical to be regarded as compatible with British goals of retaining political and economic control in Malaya. Fearful of potential Malay unrest and the growth of pro-Indonesian forces among the Malays consequent upon the enforcement of the Malayan Union scheme, and realizing that "A Malay Malaya was more likely to stay in the sterling area",<sup>99</sup> the British turned exclusively to the Malays in

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<sup>99</sup>James de V. Allen, op. cit., 25. The generally accepted reasons for the complete reversal of British policy point to a combination of factors. First, it was attributed to the effectiveness of a combined attack of the ex-Malayan British Civil Servants in London and the Malay rulers. Second, Dato' Onn and his followers had been able to mobilize the Malay community into an effective and yet orderly anti-Union united front. Third, the British were confronted with a choice between Dato' Onn's UMNO which had so far confined their protest along purely constitutional lines and the radical Malay movement which had demanded immediate self-government and ultimate union with Indonesia. Failure to compromise with the UMNO, it would seem to the British, might well precipitate communal violence which would certainly work to the advantage of the radical groups. Finally, it is generally argued that there was a complete lack of interest in the Union plan on the part of the non-Malay communities. See James de V. Allen, op. cit., 57, 70; and T. H. Silcock and Ungku Aziz, "Nationalism in Malaya" in William L. Holland (ed.), Asian Nationalism and the West (New York: Macmillan Co., 1953), 302-322. While these reasons are generally sound, the view that the non-Malay communities were largely apathetic to the Union scheme is certainly not a fair assessment. See M. R. Stenson, "Malayan Union ...", op. cit., 344-354; and ma-lai-a min-tzu ying-tung chien-shih, op. cit., 4-31. Meanwhile, James de V. Allen (op. cit., 21-27) has also put forward four hypothetical





May 1946 to work out "fresh constitutional arrangements which would be acceptable to Malay opinion."

When the decision to begin secret negotiations with the representatives of the Malay rulers and the UMNO to the exclusion of all other communities was announced by the British in the summer of 1946, the non-Malay communities and the left-wing sections of the Malay population started a storm of protests which lasted until June 1948 when the Emergency was declared. As their demand for an equal share in the negotiations was ignored, an All-Malayan Council of Joint Action (AMCJA) was formed on December 22, 1946, claiming to represent not only the non-Malays but the Malays as well.<sup>100</sup> Led by Tan Cheng

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theories to account for the fall of the Malayan Union. The first is the conspiracy theory which holds that the Union was a deliberate decoy, a device to waken Malay nationalism as a balance to the threat of the Communists. Allen offers as evidence of this theory the strange career of Dato' Onn bin Ja'afar and the growth of the UMNO. The second is the strategy theory which maintains that strategic considerations called for the establishment of Singapore as a separate colony and the maintenance of a stable regime in Malaya. The third is the big business theory which argues that if the Union was pushed through "it might mean an alliance of Chinese communism and Malay nationalism which would not only have Britain out of Malaya ... but would nationalize British assets as well." Finally, the personality theory assumes a conflict of viewpoints between Sir Edward Gent who was pro-Union and the pro-sultan faction in the Colonial Office. The demise of the Union signified that the pro-sultan school had emerged as a majority following Gent's death in an air clash.

<sup>100</sup> The AMCJA marked the birth of the first multi-racial political alliance in Malaya's history. Its expressed objective was "to provide the machinery for the various communities, through their organizations and associations, to reach agreement on all points connected with the future constitution of Malaya, thus avoiding the dangers of





Lock, the AMCJA put forward six constitutional proposals, calling for the creation of a United Malaya inclusive of Singapore, responsible self-government based on universal suffrage and equal citizenship rights for all who made Malaya their home and the object of their undivided loyalty, and demanding that the British negotiate with it concerning the constitutional future of the country.<sup>101</sup> It denounced

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separated and self-interested representation." See David R. Rees-Williams, "The Constitutional Position in Malaya", op. cit., 177; and Tan Cheng Lock, Malayan Problems ..., op. cit., 132. The component elements of the AMCJA included the Malayan Democratic Union, the Malayan New Democratic Youth, the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Ex-Service Comrades' Association, the Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Union (which claimed to represent a total membership of more than 200,000 workers), the Singapore Clerical and Administrative Workers' Union, the Malayan Indian Congress, the Ceylon Tamils Association, the Indian Chamber of Commerce, the Straits Chinese British Association, the Malay Nationalist Party, the Angkatan Pemuda Insaf, the Malay People's Party, the Pan-Malayan Congress and the 12 Women's Federations in Malaya. The AMCJA, observed one British MP, "appears ... to consist of a mixed bag of Malays disgruntled with the major Malay party, middle-class Chinese and representatives of other communities. It represents the urban against the rural interest, the federal against the State interest, republicans against constitutionalists; there may be even some communist influence in it. Not only a mixed but an uneasy bag, unlikely to hold together under strain." David R. Rees-Williams, "The Constitutional Position in Malaya", op. cit., 177-178. While this was true, the mere fact that a united front was formed out of this "mixed bag" and a compromise solution could be reached among them was indeed a remarkable achievement in the context of a communal society.

<sup>101</sup>The other three proposals were as follows: the sultans should be re-installed as the sovereign constitutional heads of the states; matters touching the religion and custom of the Malays should be left entirely in the hands of the Malay community; and the political, economic and educational standards of the Malays should be advanced. See ma-lai-a min-tzu ying-tung chien-shih, op. cit., 11; and Tan Cheng Lock, Malayan Problems ..., op. cit., 170. The AMCJA sent 2 telegrams to the British Colonial Secretary on December 16 and December 22, 1946, asking the British government to recognize the



the Report of the Working Committee as a design "to establish a dis-united and disjointed Malaya to be governed autocratically by a bureaucracy without any certain prospect of a progressive advancement towards self-government."<sup>102</sup> Insisting on their demand for direct negotiations with the British, the AMCJA boycotted the Consultative Committee.<sup>103</sup>

In order to attract more Malay support and to strengthen their voice in the multiracial alliance, the Malay Nationalist Party and other Malay groups withdrew from the AMCJA and organized on February 22, 1947, a Malay Council of Joint Action called the Pusat Tenaga Ra'ayat (PUTERA), or the People's United Front.<sup>104</sup> Henceforth, the

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Council "as the only body which represents all Asiatic communities of Malaya and with which the Government may conduct negotiations on constitutional issues, thus enabling the Government to treat the Council as the one representative body constituted on national lines and speaking with the united voice of Malaya." See Tan Cheng Lock, Malayan Problems ..., op. cit., 165-168 for full texts of the 2 telegrams.

<sup>102</sup> Tan Cheng Lock, Malayan Problems ..., op. cit., 138.

<sup>103</sup> In its second telegram mentioned in note 101 above, the AMCJA also informed the British government that it was "resolved not to submit any proposals or to enter into any discussions or negotiations with the recently appointed consultative committee of Government nominees who cannot claim the status of representatives of the people of Malaya." Tan Cheng Lock, Malayan Problems ..., op. cit., 168. See also supra, 250, note 83.

<sup>104</sup> The PUTERA included the Malay Nationalist Party, the Angkatan Pemuda Insaf (Progressive Youth Corps), the Angkatan Wanita Sedara (Awakened Women's Forces), and about 80 smaller Malay associations, and claimed to represent a total membership of 100,000 Malays. See Ian Morrison, op. cit., 245.





organized opposition to the Federation constitution took the form of an AMCJA-PUTERA alliance. Despite their differences,<sup>105</sup> the two partners of the Alliance were able in July-August 1947 to agree on a People's Constitution for Malaya which was presented as an alternative to the constitutional proposals prepared by the Working Committee. The People's Constitution provided for the unification of Malaya and Singapore, an elected central legislature which was to have a 55-percent Malay majority for the first nine years, the adoption of Malay as the national language while allowing other languages to be used in the legislature, the institution of a nationality to be called by the Malay word Melayu which was to be open to all born in Malaya, and the creation of a Council of Races which would decide whether or not each bill passed by the legislature was in any way racially discriminatory.<sup>106</sup> In contrast to the Federation proposals, which were formulated on the assumption of Malay paramountcy as a national base in a multicommunal society, the People's Constitution was conceived in terms of a Malayan

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<sup>105</sup> As a successor to the KMM, the Malay Nationalist Party, the dominant component of the PUTERA, was not only in favor of self-government but also in favor of a Greater Indonesia. Its president, Dr. Burhanuddin declared: "We have a three part program: first, to demand self-government for Malaya, then form a Malay independent government, and at that time we will decide the third stage - the amalgamation with the Indonesian Republic. Time will tell how long it will take. Everything depends upon the surrounding situation. If it is not favorable, it will take years." By Them, The MNP, unpublished series of articles concerning the MNP, n.d., to be found in the archives of the Straits Times, Kuala Lumpur, p. 4. Such an orientation seemed to have prevented the whole-hearted cooperation between the AMCJA and the PUTERA.

<sup>106</sup> See Sin Chew Jit Poh, September 1, 1947, 5; and ma-lai-a min-tzu ying-tung chien-shih, op. cit., 18-19. For full text, see Sin Chew Jit Poh, September 10, 1947, 5.



nation. Although Malayan nationality was to be called Melayu and Malay was to be adopted as national language, all races born in Malaya, including their languages and cultures, were to be accepted as legitimate components of the new Malayan nation with equal political rights. Thus, full acceptance was to be accorded to all communities while Malay forms were to be adopted for certain national purposes so as to give cohesion and shape to the new Malayan community.

The People's Constitution represented the first attempt by members of all communities to define and solve the problems of their conflicting demands and to formulate an acceptable constitutional framework in which the larger Malayan community could be developed. It was perhaps the least communally-oriented constitution which had ever been drawn up in Malaya<sup>107</sup> but its anti-colonial stand, its demand for im-

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<sup>107</sup>The People's Constitution had won some favorable comments from the Straits Times: "for the first time, Malay representatives have accepted the principle that Malayan citizenship, with voting rights and full equality in all other aspects, should be given to anyone born in Malaya irrespective of race, provided that Malayan citizenship means unreserved allegiance to Malaya, and provided also that non-Malay citizens call themselves "Melayu". Here also is full acceptance by non-Malay representatives of the principle that Eurasian, Chinese, Indian and Ceylonese, if they are to enjoy the rights of Malayan citizens, must owe allegiance to Malaya alone and renounce all thought of dual nationality or any other form of divided allegiance, except to His Majesty the King. We must admire the idealism and the farsightedness shown by both sides in these new proposals for citizenship. They are important as the first attempt to put Malayan party politics on a higher plane than that of rival racial interests and also as the first attempt to build a political bridge between the domiciled non-Malay communities and the Malay race." The Straits Times, editorial, September 23, 1947, 6. The Chinese press also gave it favorable responses. See Sin Chew Jit Poh's editorials on October 18, 1947, 1, and November 18, 1947, 1.





mediate self-government, the offering of political equality to the non-Malays, and its association with left-wing politics made it totally unacceptable to the British and the UMNO whose main concern was the establishment of Malay cultural and political supremacy. The masses of the Malay ra'ayat "were more attracted by the traditional (Malay) nationalism of the U.M.N.O., and preferred to support a party which had identified itself with Malay interests alone."<sup>108</sup> With the outbreak of Communist guerrilla warfare in 1948, many of the active member groups of the AMCJA-PUTERA were outlawed and the People's Constitution was never mentioned again.

Beginning from 1947, the active public of the non-Malay communities became increasingly uneasy, critical and vocal about the fact that they had been completely ignored in the process of constitutional negotiations.<sup>109</sup> The various Chinese chambers of commerce, guilds and

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<sup>108</sup>K. J. Ratnam, op. cit., 151.

<sup>109</sup>General dissatisfaction with the Federation proposals was well expressed in an editorial of the Straits Times on July 25, 1947 (p. 4): "The Chinese are not satisfied, for they feel that there has been a shift of British policy since the early days of the liberation, and that the promise made in the Malayan Union scheme for complete abolition of traditional racial privilege in the new Malaya has not been kept. The left wing of the Malay nationalist movement, represented by PUTERA, is not satisfied because it has been excluded from the Malay delegation on the constitution-making body. The advanced political groups in the non-Malay communities, represented by the Pan-Malayan Council of Joint Action, are not satisfied for various reasons, even the conservative or middle-of-the-road elements in the non-Malay domiciled communities can hardly be expected to show any marked enthusiasm over a constitution which is primarily [the product of] an Anglo-Malay body." Moreover, despite British repeated





clan associations joined forces with the AMCJA in supporting the demands for a united Malaya inclusive of Singapore and equal citizenship rights, in organizing protest meetings, and in sending protest telegrams to the British government.<sup>110</sup> During September-October

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assurance to consult all the local communities before any final decisions were made, the British government officially declared its acceptance of the Working Committee's proposals even prior to the appointment of the Consultative Committee. Tan Cheng Lock held that this repeated assurance should "mean that the promised consultations will be conducted direct with the Government." He charged that to force a Committee of "Government Nominees" on the public as a medium was "tantamount to confronting the people of Malaya with a fait accompli" and "a breach of faith by the Government for failing to fulfil their pledge." Tan Cheng Lock, Malayan Problems ..., op. cit., 135, 167.

<sup>110</sup> On September 2, 1947, for example, the Chinese Chambers of Commerce sent a joint telegram to the British Colonial Secretary, expressing the "utter disappointment" of the Chinese at the new constitution and stating that it would "engender distrust and disharmony and grievously split the Malayan population into two irreconcilable camps." It urged the appointment of a Royal Commission to come out from London and draft a new constitution to correct the situation. See Sin Chew Jit Poh, September 4, 1947, 5. For similar telegrams, see ibid., February 6, 1947, 7; February 25, 1947, 5; August 21, 1947, 7; and November 3, 1947, 5. During the same period, several Pan-Malayan Conferences of the Chinese chambers of commerce, guilds and clan associations (more than 80 units altogether) had been held, denouncing the new constitutional proposals and supporting the AMCJA programs. See Sin Chew Jit Poh, January 20 and 28, 1947; February 4, 12, 14, 17, 20, 25 and 26, 1947; March 3, 6, 12 and 15, 1947; April 1, 3, 4 and 7, 1947; and its August, September and October issues. The basic demands of these Chinese groups were a united Malaya inclusive of Singapore, equal citizenship rights, and self-government, with special emphasis on the first two. They also agreed that the Malays should enjoy special protection and should be assisted in their economic and educational advancement. For example, the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce issued a memorandum criticizing the Federation proposals as containing "a distorted conception of the role of the Chinese in Malaya. The Chinese of Malaya are most anxious not to encroach upon or interfere with the special position of the Malays



1947, the AMCJA and the various Chinese chambers of commerce, guilds and associations began to organize hartal (work stoppage, a form of mass protest introduced from India) in all the major cities and towns in Malaya, which led to a country-wide one on October 20, 1947.<sup>111</sup> At the same time, the new Singapore Legislative Council elections were boycotted by the Chinese community. Consequently, in a predominantly Chinese city, only one Chinese was elected.<sup>112</sup>

These widespread non-Malay protests found the official chan-

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... and will gladly contribute to the safeguard of such special position as well as the promotion of Malay welfare and advancement as a whole. ... The Chinese have no desire to convert Malaya into Chinese territory with political ties to China. ... they have accepted Malaya as the country of their adoption and desire to cooperate with the other communities in it." See The Straits Times, February 21, 1947, 4. Similar views were expressed by the Pan-Malayan Conferences of Chinese chambers of commerce, guilds and associations. See D. R. Rees-Williams, M.P., "Malaya in the Melting Pot", Eastern World, June 1947, 17. Influential Chinese businessmen like Tan Kah Kee, Lee Kong Chian and H. S. Lee also came out to demand equal citizenship and a united Malaya including Singapore and showed their willingness to assist the Malays in economic progress. See, for example, Sin Chew Jit Poh, March 10, 1947, 6; August 26-27, 1947, 5 and 7 respectively.

<sup>111</sup>The first hartal took place in Malacca, Johore, Negri Sembilan, Selangor, and Perak on September 9, 1947. Later, it spread to the whole country. See Sin Chew Jit Poh, September 10-29, 1947. For a description of the success of the country-side hartal on October 20, 1947, see a special report entitled "A Single Cigarette Was Not Available in a City of One Million" in Sin Chew Jit Poh, October 21, 1947, 5; and its editorial of the same date. Official reports expressed unpleasant surprise at the strength of popular support and the absence of intimidation. See Monthly Review of Chinese Affairs, 14 (October 1947), 12.

<sup>112</sup>See Victor Purcell, The Chinese in Southeast Asia, op. cit., 327.





nels of access closed and yielded no result. The Federation of Malaya, or Persekutuan Tanah Melayu,<sup>113</sup> was officially established on February 1, 1948. The day was declared by the non-Malay protestors as "a Day of Sorrow" on which the people of Malaya were asked to half-mast their flags.<sup>114</sup>

### The Emergency and Communal Relations

As seen in the preceding paragraphs, the Federation of Malaya Agreement was implemented without non-Malay support and consent.<sup>115</sup> As

<sup>113</sup>It is indeed an anomaly to translate "Federation of Malaya" into Malay as Persekutuan Tanah Melayu, which stands for "Federation of the Malay Lands". This translation was intended to show that Malaya was a Malay country. Thus, Tunku Abdul Rahman, the former Prime Minister of the country, said: "It is understood by all that this country, by its very name, its traditions, and character, is Malay." See Tunku Abdul Rahman in an interview printed in the Asia Magazine (A Weekly Supplement to the Sunday Times of Malaya), August 30, 1964, p. 6. It should be pointed out here that the term Malaya bears no relationship to the term Malay, Malaya has its origin in Tamil which means "mountain" while Malay is an English version for the race Melayu.

<sup>114</sup>Representatives of 85 social groups held a meeting on February 1, 1948, condemning the inauguration of the Federation and declaring the day as "a Day of Sorrow". Delegates pledged themselves "to fight racial discrimination and to do everything in their power to combat and subdue any communal disharmony which would tend to be promised by the partition of Malaya and the people by the Government's constitution." See The Straits Times, February 2, 1948, 5.

<sup>115</sup>A number of writers tend to see the Federation as an improvement on the Malayan Union scheme. It is argued that the faults of the Union had been remedied in a fair manner, because the Federation was less colonial in form, its citizenship provisions, though restrictive, were "generous" to the non-Malays and it laid the foundations for progressive constitutional development. See, for example, James de V.



a result, it failed to inspire among the non-Malays a sense of attachment to, and identification with, the new political order. Tan Cheng Lock wrote:

The new Constitution, which offers no prospect of the people of the country ever exerting political power, and which maintains the legal fiction of the sovereignty and independence of the nine Malay States and their Sultans, sacrifices the legitimate rights and interests of the non-Malay communities. It has in consequence created a profound sense of political frustration, discontent and resentment among all elements in those communities. Moreover, its undemocratic structure

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Allen, op. cit., 19; and K. J. Ratnam, op. cit., 54-57. "On the whole", another observer wrote, "the draft federal constitution has been well received by all sections of opinion in Malaya." See Barbara Whittingham-Jones, "The Federation of Malaya", The Nineteenth Century and After, 848, 142 (October 1947), 193. These assessments completely disregard Chinese and Indian reactions to the rejection of the Malayan Union. In spite of these favorable comments, the fact that not one Chinese or Indian association or leader openly regarded the new constitution as a "generous" offer to the non-Malays can hardly be dismissed out of hand. It is true that a majority of the Chinese and Indian masses remained inactive in politics at that time; but it should be remembered that in any transitional society where a participant culture has not yet developed fully, it is the politically active elites who really speak and act for the masses (see supra, 99). A careful reading of Tan Cheng Lock's speeches and writings would reveal that the 1948 Agreement was not "well received" by the non-Malays. Even the conservative and usually pro-British Straits Times showed discontent with the new constitution. Its editorial of July 25, 1947 (p. 4) pointed out that "it cannot be said that the new constitution bears the stamp of democracy" because it was not formulated "by a constituent assembly" but by "a purely Anglo-Malay body". "There is not likely to be much satisfaction with a constitution arrived at in this way, except the Rulers and UMNO and the British Administration." Emphasis added. See also supra, 263, note 109.





has caused bitter dissatisfaction among the more advanced political circles in the general population inclusive of the Malays.<sup>116</sup>

Under this situation, as M. R. Stenson points out, "the Chinese and few Indian activists, having been offered no means of effective, peaceful, representative political action and being subject to increasingly repressive administrative policy, were left with no alternative to revolt."<sup>117</sup>

Beginning in April 1948, Communist-controlled trade unions began to organize a series of strike actions in the west-coast states,<sup>118</sup> and individual incidents of violence and disturbance were reported. In response, British policy toward the workers, trade unionists, and left-wing and Communist organizations and newspapers became increasingly stern and repressive. In June, all over the country raids upon Communists, trade union organizers, left-wing newspapermen and other

<sup>116</sup>Tan Cheng Lock, "A Chinese View of Malaya", op. cit., 18.

<sup>117</sup>M. R. Stenson, "Malayan Union ...", op. cit., 253; and idem, Repression and Revolt..., op. cit., 10-30. The Communist argument that the outbreak of guerrilla war in Malaya was a reaction to the Federation plans (see Victor Purcell, Malaya: Communist or Free? (London: Gollancz, 1953), 60-61) has not been generally accepted but it can be argued that the Federation plans, by dividing the country so deeply, helped to create the conditions for Communist revolt and made it difficult to quell.

<sup>118</sup>See ma-lai-a min-tzu ying-tung chien-shih, op. cit., 33. During the first half of 1948, a total of 85 strikes took place in Perak, and 43, in Johore. See also David R. Rees-Williams, "The Malayan Situation in 1948", op. cit., 11.





sympathizers began and these were accompanied by large-scale arrests. In mid-June, the Communists and other activists fled into the jungle and formed a Malayan Races Liberation Army to fight the British. A state of Emergency covering the entire Federation was declared on June 13 and was extended to Singapore on June 24. Before the new Federation could have time to establish its legitimacy in a communally-divided environment, the whole country was turned into a police state in the face of the Communist armed revolt. The state of Emergency was to last until 1960 when the guerrilla forces were defeated. The Emergency regulations were replaced by the enactment of an Internal Security Act which was designed to control the political activities of the subversive elements in the society.

Without going into the details of the Communist revolt and British measures of counterinsurgency,<sup>119</sup> the effects of the 12-year Emergency on communal relations in Malaysia can now be briefly examined. One important consequence of the Emergency which has a lasting impact on Malay political orientation and way of thinking is the tendency of

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<sup>119</sup>For this information, see Lucian W. Pye, op. cit.; Edgar O'Balance, Malaya: The Communist Insurgent War 1948-1960 (London: Faber and Faber, 1966); Sir Robert G. K. Thompson, Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam (New York: Praeger, 1966); Richard L. Clutterbuck, The Long, Long War: Counter Insurgency in Malaya and Vietnam (New York: Praeger, 1966); Bum-Joon Lee Park, The British Experience of Counterinsurgency in Malaya: The Emergency 1948-1960 (Ph.D. Dissertation, American University, 1965); G. Z. Hanrahan, The Communist Struggle in Malaya (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1954); and Robert O. Tilman, "The Non-Lessons of the Malayan Emergency", Asian Survey, 6, 8 (August 1966), 407-419.



the Malay population to identify the Chinese with the Communists.

Such a stereotype was based on a number of subjective beliefs which were formed during the Emergency. First, it was believed among many Malays that the Communist armed revolt was a Chinese movement aiming at taking Malaya from their hands. Such a belief was reinforced by the fact that the Communist rebels were predominantly Chinese.<sup>120</sup>

Second, the Malays tended to equate the rural Chinese with Communist supporters. The initial apathy of the Chinese community toward the counterinsurgency efforts of the British was taken as an indication of Chinese sympathy with the rebels, although Chinese indifference could reasonably be attributed to the presence of other causes.<sup>121</sup> The

<sup>120</sup> According to Victor Prucell's estimate, "the proportion of Malay to Chinese guerrillas was only about one in twenty." See his Malay: Communist or Free?, op. cit., 147.

<sup>121</sup> The Chinese were apathetic not because they were all supporting the Communists but because this apathy was inherent in the political system which denied them a sense of attachment and identification. "Chinese and Indians", F. G. Carnell wrote, "argue that they fail to co-operate wholeheartedly because of the invidious and humiliating discrimination to which the Malays and their partners, the British, subject them. In a Malaya which they have played an equal part with the British in building, they are being made to feel 'political paupers' or 'second class citizens', members of unwanted communities who are unworthy of equality of rights with the Malays. In what amounts to a battle of ideas ... most of the Malays are not only seeking to cling to authoritarian forms of government, but with British encouragement, are expecting the Chinese and Indians in the Federation to undertake onerous obligations of citizenship like national service when most of them cannot even qualify as citizens." See F. G. Carnell, "British Policy in Malaya", Political Quarterly, 23, 3 (July-September 1952), 271. Furthermore, without effective British protection, the rural Chinese might feel insecure in giving support to the British for fear of Communist reprisals. At the same time,





Malays also tended to link the eventual defeat of the guerrilla movement with the isolation of the rural Chinese in the New Villages in 1950-52, without knowing that, while the resettlement was designed to cut off food supplies for the guerrillas, it might have failed to achieve its goal (as in the case of South Vietnam) if the Chinese were as strongly committed to the Communist cause as the Malays tended to believe them to be.<sup>122</sup> Third, the counterinsurgency war in Malaya was waged mainly with British and Malay military forces. In the early stages of the Emergency, British military policy was based on the assumption that every Chinese was a potential Communist while the Malays were regarded as British allies.<sup>123</sup> This policy certainly encouraged the Malay tendency to equate the Communist problem with the Chinese problem. Finally, as the Official Year Book (Malaya) of 1962 wrote, "the Malays, being Muslims, regarded the atheistic materialism of Marx and Engels as complete anathema and rejected it out of hand as

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Chinese reluctance to offer manpower support for the counterinsurgency war was, perhaps, more due to Chinese tradition than to their deeply-felt sympathy with the Communists. It was a long-standing and time-honored tradition of the Chinese that good sons should never become soldiers.

<sup>122</sup> See Robert O. Tilman, "The Non-Lessons of the Malayan Emergency", op. cit., 411-419; and Lea E. Williams, op. cit., 21, and passim.

<sup>123</sup> For example, the indiscriminate shooting at Batang Kali and the burning of Chinese huts and the destruction of their crops at Ka-chau were two of a series of incidents in which Chinese were killed and their properties destroyed without proof that they were guilty of collaboration with the rebels. See Victor Purcell, The Chinese in Southeast Asia, op. cit., 334-335; and idem, "The Position of the Chinese Community in Malaya", Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society (London), 40 (January 1953), 70-81.



an undisguised attack on their religion."<sup>124</sup> Thus, to the traditional fear of "alien domination" was now added a new fear of Chinese Communism, and the Communist victory in China had accentuated this fear.

During the Emergency and in today's Malaysia, the legacy that only the Chinese could become Communists has been kept alive by the Malay-dominated political system as a convenient political weapon to unite the Malays and to stamp out any serious Chinese objections to Malay supremacy. As one observer points out, the Malaysian government

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<sup>124</sup>Federation of Malaya, Official Year Book, vol. 2 (Kuala Lumpur: Government Printer, 1962), 388. Lucian W. Pye offered a number of explanations to account for the fact that Communism has little appeal to the Malays in Malaya. He wrote: "for the Malays, the process of meeting the implications of a more modernized society has not in general been harsh. Even for those who feel less bound by their Moslem faith, there has been no need to challenge or directly oppose their traditional religion. Generally, there have been happy relations with the British, whom they have seen as protectors and advisers and thus performing a role that is compatible with the legal position of the British in Malaya. They have been able to recognize the authority and the sternness of the British as those of a teacher and not as a political foe. Such considerations ... have minimized the appeal of Communism for the Malays and have made that revolutionary creed appear to them excessively demanding, harsh, and dogmatic. When utopia is to be found near at hand, and when an important element of it is a gracious and easy approach to life, there can be little attraction in a system which promises a distant millennium built upon struggle and self-sacrifice. Thus, even though the vast majority of the Malays have had little chance to determine the social and political development of Malaya, and even though they have had in general the lowest standard of life of any of the peoples in the country and the least opportunities for material advancement, they have shown little sympathy for the promises of Communism. Indeed, whenever Malays in any number have attempted to replace the cosmos of Allah with the sociology of Marxism-Leninism they have tended only to become muddled." Pye's observations were made in 1956 before Malaya's independence. Op. cit., 50.





has "an unusual readiness to apply the term communist to quite diverse opposition figures and political groups."<sup>125</sup> In 1969, the government placed major blame for the May riots in Kuala Lumpur upon the Communists, secret societies, and opposition parties.<sup>126</sup> Regardless of the terms used (Communists, secret societies or opposition parties), they all meant Chinese to the Malays. The practice of blaming the Communists for all the troubles in Malaysia has been used to invoke more easily the extensive security regulations regarding detention. The deliberate perpetuation of this legacy of the Emergency has not only increased Malay suspicion and distrust of the Chinese. It has also made it difficult for the Chinese to engage in peaceful articulations of their legitimate grievances as these articulations are too frequently perceived by the policy makers as being the products of Communist "subversion". The long-term effect of this practice may well turn the legacy of the Emergency into a self-fulfilling prophecy as the denial of independent articulation to interests may lead to violent behavior to transmit political demands.

The second major effect of the Emergency was an intensification of British efforts to promote Malays' special privileges. The

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<sup>125</sup>Justus M. van der Kroef, Communism in Malaysia and Singapore: A Contemporary Survey (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967), 228.

<sup>126</sup>See Tunku Abdul Rahman, May 13: Before and After (Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Melayu Press Ltd., 1969); and The May 13 Tragedy: A Report of the National Operations Council (Kuala Lumpur: National Operations Council, 9th October, 1969).





outbreak of the guerrilla revolt reinforced British conviction that a Malay Malaya was more likely to stay in the British fold as the real danger to political stability in Malaya was perceived as coming from the Chinese Communists. The advantage the Malay leaders could gain under this situation was crucial for it was natural for the British to make political concessions to their reliable allies.<sup>127</sup> Dato' Onn bin Ja'afar, the President of the UMNO and holder of the portfolio of Home Affairs in the nominated Federal Legislative Council, was not slow to make political demands in return for Malay military assistance in the counterinsurgency war.<sup>128</sup> This led to an increase of Malay military units, the establishment of the Rural and Industrial Development Authority in 1950 designed to improve the economic conditions of the Malays,<sup>129</sup> an increase in Malay participation in government, and the adoption of an assimilationist policy embodied in the Communities

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<sup>127</sup> See Wang Gungwu, "Malayan Nationalism", Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society (London), 49, 3-4 (July-October 1962), 321.

<sup>128</sup> Dato' Onn visited London in October 1948 and put forward three UMNO demands: 1. greater Malay participation in the federal government, including the appointment of a Malay as Deputy High Commissioner and the appointment of Malays as heads of some departments in the public services; 2. an increase of Malay military units; and 3. a British grant of ten million pounds to be spent on agricultural loans to Malays and in promoting their economic development. See The Straits Times, October 25, 1948, 1. Onn's demands caused some apprehension and resentment among the Chinese and led to a demand of some Penang Chinese for secession from the Federation. See Ian Morrison, op. cit., 249.

<sup>129</sup> See Charles Gamba and Ungku A. Aziz, "RIDA and Malayan Economic Development", Far Eastern Survey, 20, 10 (October 1951), 123-126; and supra, 85, note 45, and 95, note 57.



Liaison Committee's citizenship proposals, which were accepted by the Federal Legislative Council in 1951.<sup>130</sup>

During the first years of the Emergency, policy making in the Federation was dominated by the British and Malay leaders whereas the Chinese community was left without an effective articulation structure to act as a counterweight to Malay political pressure. Although the Malayan Chinese Association was formed in 1949, it was more of a welfare organization than a political group in the first three years of its existence. Its activities were conditioned by the Emergency and confined to providing financial assistance for the government's resettlement program. It is thus clear that during the Emergency, backed by the British, the Malays had acquired a position of supremacy which was not only political but military as well. The legacy that only the Malays could be trusted with arms was written into the 1957 and 1963 constitutions in the form of establishing a separate Malay Royal Regiment whose recruitment was open only to the Malays and of imposing a quota of at least four to one in favor of the Malays in the recruitment of the Federal Royal Regiment.

The third important effect of the Emergency is related to the resettlement program. The resettlement operation which involved a total of 573,000 persons was undertaken in 1950-1951 to isolate the Com-

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<sup>130</sup> See Federation of Malaya, The Federation of Malaya Agreement (Amendment) Ordinance 1951 (Kuala Lumpur: Government Printer, 1951). This amendment will be examined in the next chapter.





munist guerrillas and to shatter their support and supply bases in the rural areas.<sup>131</sup> Of the total population involved in the resettlement, 86 percent were Chinese, 9 percent Malay, 4 percent Indian, and 1 percent "others". The movement resulted in remoulding the population pattern of Malaya and produced far-reaching political consequences in a communal society.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>131</sup>The operation was known as the Briggs Plan because it was initiated by Lieutenant-General Sir Harold Briggs who was appointed Director of Operations in Malaya in April 1950. For some accounts of the plan, see Edgar O'Ballance, op. cit., 97-116.

<sup>132</sup>There is a sizable literature on the emergency resettlement and its social and political implications for Malaya. See, for example, O. W. Wolters, op. cit., 1-8; Karl J. Pelzer, "Resettlement in Malaya", Yale Review, 41 (Spring 1952), 391-404; Katherine Sim, "Resettlement Camps in Malaya", Corona, 4 (July 1952), 264-266; E. H. G. Dobby, "Resettlement Transforms Malaya: A Case History of Relocating the Population of an Asian Plural Society", Economic and Cultural Change, 1 (October 1952), 163-178; idem, "Recent Settlement Changes in South Malaya", Malayan Journal of Tropical Geography, 1 (October 1953), 1-8; Han Suyin, "Malaya: The 'Emergency' in Its Seventh Year", The Reporter, 11 (December 16, 1954), 23-27; John Kerry King, "Malaya's Resettlement Problem", Far Eastern Survey, 23, 3 (March 1954), 33-40; Ronald Stead, "The New Villages in Malaya", Geographical Magazine, 27 (April 1955), 642-652; J. A. T. Horseley, Resettlement of a Community (Singapore: University of Malaya Research Paper for the Diploma of Social Studies, April 1955); Hamzah Sendut, "Rasah - A Resettlement Village in Malaya", Asian Survey, 1, 11 (November 1961), 21-26; idem, "The Resettlement Villages in Malaya", Geography, 47 (January 1962), 41-46; Kernial Singh Sandhu, "Emergency Resettlement in Malaya", Journal of Tropical Geography, 18 (August 1964), 157-183; idem, "The Population of Malaya: Some Changes in the Pattern of Distribution between 1947 and 1957", Journal of Tropical Geography, 15 (June 1961), 82-96; idem, "The Saga of the 'Squatter' in Malaya", Journal of Southeast Asian History, 5, 1 (March 1964), 143-177; Rhoderick Dhu Renick, Jr., "The Emergency Regulations of Malaya: Causes and Effects", Journal of Southeast Asian History, 6, 2 (September 1965), 1-39; Maynard Weston Dow, Nation-Building in Southeast Asia (Boulder, Colorado: Pruett Press, Inc., 1966), 1-87; W. C. S. Corry,



First, the resettlement program was regarded as a military operation. Many Chinese farmers and squatters were forced to burn their huts and to abandon their lands and crops. The urgent need for rapid action and the lack of experience of the resettlement administrators caused unnecessary hardships for the rural Chinese and the result was general dissatisfaction and bitterness.<sup>133</sup> In the first few years of the resettlement, the New Villages were more like concentration camps than ordinary resettlement centers. They were all surrounded by a barbed-wire fence with a wide apron to prevent easy access to them or outlet from them. Emergency regulations imposed food control and strict restrictions on the freedom of movement. Bet-

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A General Survey of the New Villages (Kuala Lumpur: Government Printer, 1954); Paul Markandan, The Problem of the New Villages of Malaya (Singapore: Donald Moore, 1954); Ray Nyce, The 'New Villages' of Malaya: A Community Study (Ph.D. Dissertation, Hartford Seminary Foundation, 1962); and Robert O. Tilman, "The Non-Lessons of the Malayan Emergency", op. cit., 407-419.

<sup>133</sup> Some of the deplorable conditions and events that accompanied the Briggs Plan can be gathered from the following description by a Chinese critic: "How undramatic, trivial it all was ... and so hot too ... they were still putting up the wire fences, round the high ground. Some lorries had come in filled with people to be resettled, and armoured cars, and everywhere policemen with guns leveled against everyone round them, and soldiers. Then the people came out of the lorries and stood in groups, there on the central square ... and the quiet hard hatred seeped out of them thick, thick. ... I could smell the hate hitting us full in the face, great waves of it out of the docile people lining up in the square. Entire villages had been burnt down, pigs slaughtered, lorries full of people removed wholesale, unprovided with food and water, and brutality had reaped its dubious rewards." Han Suyin, ... And The Rain My Drink (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1956), 110, 111, 113. Han's work was a novel but her observation was, nevertheless, valid.





ween the hours of six in the evening and six in the morning all villagers were to stay in their homes. Furthermore, a large number of the rural Chinese who were suspected of any connection with the Communist guerrillas were detained and put into the various concentration camps. Many innocent people became victims of the Emergency regulations and nearly 20,000 Chinese detainees were deported to China.<sup>134</sup> In addition, the Chinese community had also suffered the most in terms of property losses and civilian casualties during the conflict. Thus, the experience of the first few years of the Emergency tended to revive the Chinese belief that they were hai-wai ku-erh (overseas orphans) who were to blame and suffer whenever troubles took place in the country. Although this feeling of bitterness and disaffection was, to a large extent, alleviated with the introduction of various welfare and security measures in the New Villages and, most importantly, by the great improvement in the conditions of life following the rubber and tin booms occasioned by the Korean War, the hardships that the New Villagers had experienced during the Emergency had accentuated their sense of political incompetence and their traditional tendency to look upon government as a "tiger". Such experience did not seem to encourage their vertical identification with the political system.

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<sup>134</sup>In 1951 alone, there were 11,500 emergency detainees in the Federation and 1,151 in Singapore. Most of them were unknown political suspects against whom no offence or intention to commit an offence had been proved in a court of law. Up to 1953, more than 15,000 detainees had been deported. For a brief account, see J. W. Goodwin, "Malaya's Unknown Political Prisoners", Eastern World, November 1953, 16-17.





Second, few New Villages were multiracial. The vast majority of the 600 or more new settlements were made up almost entirely of the Chinese. More than 50 percent of the contemporary towns and villages with a population of 1,000 or more are the products of the Briggs Plan. The overall effect of this development has accentuated west coast urbanization within the country. Most importantly, the New Village scheme has perpetuated the Chinese dominance of the urban sector of the country and greatly magnified the imbalance between the rural Malays and the urban Chinese.

Third, since almost all of the New Villages are monocultural communities, they tend to encourage communal particularism and strengthen their internal solidarity. The regrouping of the dispersed rural Chinese into the New Villages gave them a collective identity and a sense of belonging. While the resettlement has contributed to the contacts of the rural Chinese with one another and minimized their dialect and other differences, it has severed almost any personal ties and contacts that the rural Chinese might have had with the kampong Malays before the Emergency was declared.<sup>135</sup> As a result, the natural process of integration through mutual interactions and transactions was thwarted. Now that the New Villages have become permanent, residential separation along communal lines is bound to be a permanent feature of the

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<sup>135</sup>Supra, 236, note 52.



Malaysian society, unless the non-Malay New Villagers are to be encouraged to return to the rural areas. The effect of this development is that each community in Malaysia has been more thoroughly compartmentalized and solidified and, as was shown in 1969, more open to communal mobilization and assault.

Fourth, almost all New Villages are located along pre-existing highways and railroads and many of them are new additions to the pre-existing towns. Due to their greater accessibility to modern ideas and practices through their contacts with the mass media, schools, party branches, government personnel, public opinion leaders, movies, social clubs, Western culture, and other communication agents and aspects of what Lucian W. Pye calls "world culture",<sup>136</sup> the Chinese as a whole have been in a process of being mobilized and de-traditionalized. Whereas the resettlement has produced a modernizing effect on the political outlook of the Chinese community, the kampong Malays still remain largely tradition-encrusted, despite the changes that have been introduced in the rural areas. Thus, the unequal pace of modernization between the Chinese and the Malays and the stereotypes concerning the differences between orang-orang moden and orang-orang kampong have been accentuated,<sup>137</sup> and these cleavages tend to produce communal distrust,

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<sup>136</sup> Lucian W. Pye, Aspects of Political Development (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1966), 9-11.

<sup>137</sup> Supra, 71.





tensions, and mutual exclusiveness.

Fifth, in its early stage, the Briggs Plan had aroused a certain amount of jealousy and resentment among the Malays because of the large sum of public funds (a major portion of which came from the national lottery operated by the Malayan Chinese Association) spent on the Chinese resettlement program.<sup>138</sup> Basic amenities such as electricity, water, gardens, sanitation facilities, police posts, schools, dispensaries, community centers and recreation areas were provided for each village. These measures had magnified the urban-rural gap and made the kampong Malays feel that they had been neglected.

Finally, the post-war labor unrest and the Emergency have produced a peculiar phenomenon of unbalanced racial composition and participation in Malaysia's trade union movement. The Indians have been important beyond their number and have constituted more than 50 percent of the union members whereas Chinese membership has usually been less than 20 percent. The reason for this is closely related to the legacy of the Emergency mentioned earlier. The Chinese had been active in the labor union movement between 1945 and 1948 but because of the Communist orientation of their leadership, union members had been subject to stern suppression or suspicion by the government during the Emergency. This experience and the fear that to belong to a trade union organization

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<sup>138</sup>See The Straits Times, editorial, April 29, 1950, 6.



would make a Chinese, especially a non-English-speaking Chinese, suspect of Communist sympathies have discouraged Chinese laborers to join unions. Under normal circumstances, a strong multiracial trade union movement could be "a vital force for unity"<sup>139</sup> in Malaysia for in such a movement communal cleavages would be overshadowed by common economic and functional concerns. However, the Emergency has generated a sentiment among the Chinese which, together with occupational specialization along communal lines and language barriers, has made the development of a genuinely multiracial labor union movement a remote possibility.

As a whole, the Emergency was a divisive factor and tended to reinforce the communal characteristics of the Malaysian society. Although it was abrogated a decade ago, its divisive effects still linger in the political culture of today's Malaysia. The legacy of the Emergency has proved politically useful for the Malay leaders and has been kept alive as a means to mobilize the support of the Malay masses and to perpetuate Malay political domination. As a result, the fundamental causes of communal tensions which are more dangerous than the Communist threat have been left untackled.<sup>140</sup> The extensive

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<sup>139</sup> See T. H. Silcock, "Forces for Unity in Malaya: Observations of a European Resident", International Affairs, 25-26, 4 (October 1949), 461-463. See also Charles Gamba, "Parties and Politics in Malaya", Foreign Affairs Reports, 3, 5-6 (May-June 1954), 57-61.

<sup>140</sup> In an interview published in the Alliance (official organ of the Alliance Party), Professor Wang Gungwu said: "It is pointless to





use of the Internal Security Act which replaced the Emergency regulations in 1960 has inhibited the free engagement of the Chinese in the peaceful articulations of their legitimate grievances.<sup>141</sup> Now that a constitutional amendment had been passed on March 3, 1971 to prohibit any questioning of the "sensitive issues" (citizenship, the status of Malay as the national language, the special position of the Malays and the status of the rulers) inside or outside parliament,<sup>142</sup>

use the communist bogey as a weapon. What is important is to realize that communism, as an import of the West, recognizes no racial barriers. Malaysians should be made aware of the fact that the bulk of the Chinese population in the country are not communist, for the simple reason that their economic achievements will suffer if there were to be a communist takeover. The Chinese are well aware of this fact. It is most important, therefore, for the government to tackle the problems of communalism which have become more obvious than to play on the communist bogey. We may even deceive ourselves that our real problems lie elsewhere if we continue in this way." See The Alliance, 2, 9 (March 1968), 3.

<sup>141</sup>As will be seen in Part III of this study, non-Malay demands for political equality and full acceptance have been rejected on the ground that these demands seek to give a place to Chinese Communism in Malaysia. As regards the language issue, for example, the former Minister of Lands and Mines, and Education, and the present Chief Minister of Sarawak, Rahman Ya'akob, said in 1966: "Those who struggle for the Chinese language are people who want to give a place to Mao Tse Tung in Malaysia. Malaysia is not responsible for cultures which did not originate in Malaysia, including Mao Tse Tung's culture. We are only responsible for the culture that we have formed, that was born and that was created in Malaysia." Instead of saying that the Chinese language demand was not legitimate because Malaysia was a Malay country, the Minister charged that Chinese language exponents were "Mao Tse Tung's agents". See Berita Minggu, October 10, 1966.

<sup>142</sup>The Globe and Mail, March 4, 1971, 8.





it seems that the non-Malays are to be denied their constitutional rights to articulate their political goals, aspirations and grievances.

### Summary

Tan Cheng Lock argued that Malaya could become a nation because, among others, "the Malays, Indians and Chinese have lived, rejoiced and suffered together for at least half a millennium" and "in particular their common suffering during the three and half years of Japanese occupation should unite them strongly".<sup>143</sup> Unfortunately, Tan's argument was only partly true. The three major races did have the experience to live through the major political crises in the peninsula but this experience was not shared.<sup>144</sup> This chapter's scrutiny of the three major political crises - the Japanese occupation, the Malayan Union crisis, and the Emergency - in Malaya indicates that each of these events meant differently to different communities. The ways in which these political crises arose, the patterns in which the different communities reacted to them, and the manner in which they were

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<sup>143</sup> Malayan Problems ..., op. cit., 119.

<sup>144</sup> As pointed out by Karl W. Deutsch, "Instead of being automatically united by a shared history, men at least under some conditions cannot share the historical events through which they live, unless they are already in some sense united. To explain a nation as the result of shared experiences presupposes already this ability to share experience, which is the very thing that cannot be taken for granted." See his Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundation of Nationality (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1953), 5.



finally resolved, produced, not a feeling of "common suffering and common rejoicing",<sup>145</sup> but a sentiment which tended to reinforce communal particularism and exclusiveness and generate mutual suspicion and distrust among members of the different communities.

While the historical events, through which the various communities in Malaysia have lived, have promoted the internal solidarity of each of them, they have not only failed to become a unifying agent among them but also produced new barriers to the development of a sense of common attachment and belonging among them. Unlike the anti-colonialist and independence movements in other developing countries where the degree of social homogeneity is high, the national independence movement in Malaya, which began with the Malayan Union crisis, has not become a symbol of national unity. On the contrary, it has planted the seed of disunity among the various communities. Both the Malay and the non-Malay communities have been politically mobilized, not for a common national goal, but for the defence of their respective communal interests. The Malays have been mobilized to fight for their status as the sons of the soil and their privileges as the core community in the country, but never been politically resocialized to support a genuinely multiracial

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<sup>145</sup>Tan Cheng Lock wrote in 1946, "Two things go to make up a nation, which is a soul, a spiritual principle. One of these two things is a heritage of common suffering and common rejoicing in the past, and the other, which lies in the present, is actual agreement, the will to live together and to make the most of the inheritance shared jointly." See his Malayan Problems ..., op. cit., 119.





political system. Instead of looking upon the non-Malays as their fellow countrymen, the Malays have been disposed to regard them as "aliens" whose political status should be decided by the terms set by the owners of the country. The non-Malay communities, on the other hand, have been mobilized to fight for equal treatment and full acceptance of their cultures in the country because they have become attached to it and wanted to be equal partners in the emerging multi-racial nation. In this conflict in which both the Malay and the non-Malay communities have seen inequalities and injustices and harbored suspicion and distrust of each other's motives and intentions, they have tended to look upon each other as adversaries rather than as co-nation-builders.

In short, the major crises in the political history of Malaya examined in this chapter and the previous one have produced three important consequences: First, communal unity and sentiment of solidarity have been reinforced and strengthened. Second, intercommunal differences have been accentuated. Third, while the various communities have developed a strong sense of attachment to the country, this sentiment is not unified and shared. The Malays look upon Malaya (and now Malaysia) as a Malay country whereas the non-Malays see it as a multiracial nation in which every race is only one component element of the larger national community. As will be seen shortly in the next chapter, the Malay posi-

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tion has been sanctioned by the constitution of the country, although its legitimacy has been challenged by the non-Malay communities.

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## CHAPTER V

### THE CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF A MALAY MALAYSIA

As seen in the preceding two chapters, almost all political crises in Malaya since the 1920's arose from a conflict between the Malay demand for the preservation and perpetuation of the Malay characteristics of the country and their political supremacy on the one hand and the non-Malay pressure for their acceptance as full nationals and partners of the country with equal rights and status on the other. At every stage of the conflict, the crises had been resolved in favor of Malays' communal demands. The Malayan Union crisis represented the decisive turning point in the political history of post-war Malaya because its outcome was the establishment of Malay political culture as the only legitimate national culture of the country and the recognition of the Malay community as the core-unit and model of nation-building in the peninsula. The Malay victory in the anti-Union agitation was so decisive that subsequent political development in Malaya and today's Malaysia has never gone beyond the basic

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framework laid down in the Federation of Malaya Agreement of 1948.

The constitutional order established in 1948 was based on the assumption that Malay culture was not only the core-culture but also the only legitimate culture of the new Malayan nation. Under this constitutional framework, Malayanization meant simply to "make Malay" rather than to "make Malayan", and the realities of racial, cultural and social diversity were almost completely disregarded. Although subsequent constitutional developments had made certain concessions to the non-Malays in the form of more liberal citizenship provisions, they were granted within the fabric of an assimilative policy and with the confidence that Malay unity and supremacy could hardly be challenged.

Despite its "colonial" nature, the Malayan Union scheme represented the first attempt to promote "a broad-based citizenship irrespective of race or creed"<sup>1</sup> and to establish a genuinely multiracial Malaya. It was devised to fit the existing realities of post-war Malaya by giving recognition to the fact that the non-Malays were there to stay permanently, not only as economic participants, but also as political actors. This recognition necessarily called for a grant of equal political rights to all the domiciled communities without making any distinction along communal lines.<sup>2</sup> As every community was to be

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<sup>1</sup>Tan Cheng Lock, "A Chinese View of Malaya" in David R. Rees-Williams, et. al., Three Reports on the Malayan Problem (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1949), 19.

<sup>2</sup>Under the Union scheme, persons born in Malaya and Singapore and those



regarded as an equal partner in the country, the status of the Malay community and that of the non-Malay groups should be the same, each being one of the component elements of the new emerging Malayan nation. In view of the tremendous change of the population distribution and the shift of the non-Malay communities from a transient to a permanently settled status, it was inevitable that the status of the Malay community had undergone a qualitative change and must be adjusted to fit the prevailing realities if the non-Malays who now outnumbered the Malays and claimed to regard Malaya as their permanent home were to be accepted to the Malayan political system. However, the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) and the Malay rulers refused to recognize the fact that Malaya had already become a multiracial society and sought to adjust the multiracial realities to fit their claim of Malay supremacy. The rejection by the UMNO and the Malay rulers of the AMCJA-PUTERA's constitutional proposals which attempted to give the Malay community a special status as the first community among the equals as an alternative<sup>3</sup> demonstrated that Dato' Onn bin Ja'afar and his followers in the mid-1940's were, in fact, pressing for something more than a privileged

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residents therein for ten years out of the preceding fifteen would automatically acquire Malayan Union citizenship while persons born outside these territories might become citizens through naturalization after five years' ordinary residence in the Union or Singapore and fulfilling some other minor requirements. Supra, 243, note 66.

<sup>3</sup>Supra, 261-263.





position for the Malay community. What they really sought to establish was a Malay Malaya in which the non-Malays were ultimately to be assimilated to the Malay language and culture.

### Malayanization or Malayization

As pointed out by K. J. Ratnam,

In 1946 the Malays had indicated beyond all doubt that they were not willing to give the non-Malay communities a political status equal to their own; they wanted to be certain that a non-Malay would be made eligible to become a citizen only if he could be identified as being Malayan in outlook.<sup>4</sup>

In other words, only the Malays were entitled to Malayan citizenship for which the non-Malays could become eligible only if he had acquired a Malayan identity. However, in view of the absence of a Malayan culture, a "Malayan outlook" had yet to be created and identified in the long process of nation-building. Given this fact, how could one be certain about the Malayan identity of a non-Malay, or, for that matter, the Malayan identity of a Malay? Under the 1948 Federation of Malaya Agreement, the Malayan identity of a Malay was taken for granted whereas a non-Malay could become a citizen "only if he could be identified as being Malayan in outlook". Clearly, a Malayan outlook was equated with a Malay outlook, thus accepting the principle that citizenship was

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<sup>4</sup>K. J. Ratnam, Communalism and the Political Process in Malaya (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1965), 91. Emphasis added.



a recognition of assimilation to the Malay outlook rather than a first step toward the eventual creation of a multiracial Malayan nation.

In the 1948 Federation of Malaya Agreement, a clear distinction between the Malays and the non-Malays was made by defining a Malay as a person who (1) habitually spoke the Malay language, (2) professed the Muslim religion, and (3) conformed to Malay custom.<sup>5</sup> Federal citizenship was automatically given to the Malays so defined if they were the subjects of the Malay rulers, while the non-Malay subjects of the Malay rulers except those who belonged to the aboriginal tribes were excluded from the category of automatic citizenship. The non-Malays, unless both their parents were born in Malaya, had to fulfil a residence requirement of at least 10 out of the preceding 15 years in addition to local birth, and the requirements of good character and literacy either in Malay or English. By defining a "Malay" purely in terms of his cultural rather than political attributes, automatic citizenship could be granted to a Malay who "might very well have been born in Java or Sumatra and might have arrived in Malaya only yesterday".<sup>6</sup> From a political and legal point of view, an Indonesian

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<sup>5</sup>Federation of Malaya, Federation of Malaya Agreement 1948 (Kuala Lumpur: Government Printing Office, 1948), Article 128 (3) (a) and (b).

<sup>6</sup>Victor Purcell, The Chinese in Southeast Asia (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 326.



was no less an alien than a Chinese or Indian. As a matter of fact, a Malaya-born Chinese or Indian, or an ordinary non-Malay immigrant resident in Malaya, might have more political attachment to the country than a newly arrived Indonesian. The complete disregard of this elementary fact left no doubt that the constitution-makers in 1948 had planned to establish a monocultural Malaya based on Malay characteristics. Unfortunately, one would have to agree with Tan Cheng Lock that the 1948 Agreement was bound to produce the effect of "cleaving the population into two antagonistic groups, viz., Malays versus non-Malays".<sup>7</sup>

The above observations also bring out the fact that the Anglo-Malay constitution-making body in 1948 regarded loyalty to Malaya as mainly cultural rather than political attachment. The special emphasis given to cultural assimilation as a criterion of accepting the non-Malays to the new Malayan nation resulted in overlooking the problem of political pluralism in the Malayan society - political orientations toward Indonesia, China or India, for example. In order that a genuinely Malayan nation could eventually be created, it was political pluralism rather than cultural diversity that should be overcome. However, in emphasizing that the future Malayan political community should reflect a cultural homogeneity based on Malay characteristics, the pro-

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<sup>7</sup>Tan Cheng Lock, op. cit., 18. He added: "The specific problem in Malaya is how to integrate the several races living in the country into a single political community .... This can best be achieved by basing the country's Constitution on the fundamental principle of equality for all, irrespective of race or creed." Ibid., 19.





blem of political pluralism was left untackled in 1948. It was stated in the Report of the Working Committee that federal citizenship "was not a nationality, neither could it develop into a nationality. ... It is an addition to, and not a subtraction from, nationality ...".<sup>8</sup> According to this interpretation, a Chinese could obtain federal citizenship and, at the same time, continue to retain his Chinese nationality. Orientations toward external or alien political objects were thus not overcome but, in fact, indirectly encouraged. The constitution-makers were not unaware of this shortcoming but their main concern was to emphasize cultural rather than political assimilation as a test of local identity. If political allegiance was to be accepted as the test, the status of the Malays as the sons of the soil would be severely affected because, like the non-Malays, many Malays would be disqualified for automatic federal citizenship due to their recent immigrant status.

The effort to build a Malay Malaya was carried a step further in 1952 when an Ordinance was passed in the Legislative Council embodying a set of new proposals regarding the citizenship issue.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Malayan Union, Constitutional Proposals for Malaya: Report of the Working Committee Appointed by a Conference of His Excellency the Governor of the Malayan Union, Their Highnesses the Rulers of the Malay States and the Representatives of the United Malays National Organization (Kuala Lumpur: Malayan Union Printing Office, 1946), 23.

<sup>9</sup> Federation of Malaya, The Federation of Malaya Agreement (Amendment) Ordinance, 1952 (Kuala Lumpur: Government Printer, 1952).



Although the new provisions made it a bit easier for the non-Malays to become citizens,<sup>10</sup> assimilation to the Malay way of life as the basic prerequisite of acquiring a "Malayan" identity was emphatically reaffirmed. In the explanation appended to the original amendment proposals, it was asserted that the purposes of the bill were to protect the Malays "from submergence by alien ways of life" and to offer citizenship to those non-Malays who "have sufficiently assimilated themselves to this country's way of life."<sup>11</sup> It was also provided that the principle of jus soli should be applied to the Malays "because it is reasonably certain that these will be readily assimilated to the Federation's way of life" and its application should be delayed by one generation in the case of the non-Malays "because the probability is that a non-Malay of the first generation of local birth will not be assimilated to the Federation's way of life."<sup>12</sup> According to this reasoning, to be accepted as citizens, first-generation non-Malays of local birth were required to demonstrate their assimilation, while Malays of the same standing or even those of immigrant status who were

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<sup>10</sup>The new scheme created one citizenship and nine nationalities and a person could become a citizen of the Federation either by being a subject of a Malay ruler or by being a British subject and fulfilling residence and language requirements. Naturalization no longer required a demonstration of literacy but merely an ability "to speak the Malay or English language with reasonable proficiency." The Federation of Malaya Agreement (Amendment) Ordinance 1951, op. cit., 6.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 16.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 15.





subjects of the rulers, were not required. Furthermore, citizens who did not live in the two British settlements of Penang and Malacca were expected to have "a direct personal allegiance to ... their Highnesses the Rulers;"<sup>13</sup> and this was a new demand for the non-Malays. It was further declared that the problem of citizenship

cannot be solved by legislation alone for legislation alone will not assimilate people and make them into a homogeneous and happy nation. A citizen if he is to be a good citizen must be a citizen in fact and not merely a foreigner, knowing neither the language nor the customs of the country, on whom the law has conferred the privileges of citizenship because of some technical qualification.<sup>14</sup>

The 1952 Ordinance was described by the Mentri Besar (Chief Minister) of Selangor as fair to the non-Malays because "to this gift of citizenship no unusual strings are attached" and as "a fair and reasonable guarantee that the Malays retain their special position. ... A certain courtesy is due to the ground landlord."<sup>15</sup> This evaluation was certainly a gross oversimplification. The Ordinance was, in fact, far more than a fair "guarantee" of Malays' special position or a fair "courtesy" to the "ground landlord". It embodied an outright assimi-

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<sup>13</sup>The Federation of Malaya Agreement (Amendment) Ordinance 1952, op. cit., 16.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 15. Emphasis added.

<sup>15</sup>Federation of Malaya, Legislative Council, Official Report of Debates, July 11 and 12, 1951, 132.



lationist policy based on Malay hegemony, which was, to the non-Malays, "unusual strings" indeed in the context of a multiracial and multicultural society. The so-called "country's way of life" or "Federation's way of life" clearly did not refer to a Malayan but the Malay way of life. Political loyalty was thus confused with cultural attachment, Malayanization with Malayization, "a homogeneous and happy nation" with a Malay nation, and "a citizen in fact" with a citizen who had assimilated himself to the Malay way of life.<sup>16</sup> The attempt on the part of the Malays to eliminate cultural pluralism has given rise to communal tensions in Malaya and today's Malaysia, and has hindered the growth of national unity and integration.

The 1952 Ordinance was introduced as a result of the efforts of the Communities Liaison Committee, but the fact that the Committee was a multiracial body did not mean that the Ordinance enjoyed wide support from the non-Malay communities. As a matter of fact, it was introduced at a time when the Malay community had gained an absolute political advantage over the Chinese who were under the pressure of the Emergency. At that time, there was still a large void in the Malayan political scene so far as the Chinese were concerned. The Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) was itself divided on the Ordinance,

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<sup>16</sup>In today's Malaysia, as will be seen more clearly in Chapters VI and VII, Malayization or assimilation to the Malay language and culture is still the ultimate goal of the official nation-building policy.



whereas the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) was equally inactive.<sup>17</sup> Considerable opposition came from the non-Malay press<sup>18</sup> and a Chinese member of the Legislative Council alleged that the new Ordinance was worse than the 1948 Federation of Malaya Agreement.<sup>19</sup> In spite of non-Malay dissatisfaction, the 1948 and the 1952 instruments laid down the basic constitutional groundwork for a Malay Malaya, which was not significantly affected in the subsequent constitutional changes in 1957 and 1963.

#### Protection or Discrimination

Following the passage of the 1952 Ordinance, General Gerald Templer, the British High Commissioner of the Federation of Malaya, introduced in November 1952 a policy of giving special preference to the Malays in the fields of the Malayan Civil Service, business licences and scholarships in the proportion of one non-Malay to every four Malays - an official reaffirmation of a long-standing policy prac-

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<sup>17</sup>See Sunday Standard, July 1, 1951.

<sup>18</sup>See the July issues of the Sin Chew Jit Poh in 1951. In an editorial entitled "Kill This Bill", the Chinese-owned Singapore Standard urged the defeat of the bill "before it spreads the virus of communalism throughout the land." It opposed the inferior status for the "so-called aliens" and the requirement for assimilation to the "Federation's way of life", which it professed its inability to define. It asked: "Is it a holy code of some kind? Does it mean an ability to enjoy a durian or a satay feast?" Singapore Standard, July 11, 1951.

<sup>19</sup>Federation of Malaya, Legislative Council, Official Report of Debates, July 11-12, 1951, 135.





tice of both pre-war and post-war British government in Malaya.<sup>20</sup>

Templer's policy was to become the basis of the constitutionally-sanctioned Malay special position and privileges in 1957.

As seen earlier, the non-Malay communities, especially the Chinese, had shown little objection to the view that special protective measures should be taken to assist the Malays in their economic and educational advancement.<sup>21</sup> There was, however, a basic disagreement between the Malays and the non-Malays as to the nature of the special position given to the latter.<sup>22</sup> Whereas the non-Malays tended to see it as a measure of protection for the weaker community so that it could be better equipped for free competition and self-help,

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<sup>20</sup>Federation of Malaya, Legislative Council, Official Report of Debates, November 19-22, 1952, 473-474.

<sup>21</sup>See supra, 89-90, and 264, note 110. A leading member of the Chinese community, Tan Kah Kee, stated in 1947: "All races, if they are to share with the Malays the rights and duties of citizenship, should first owe their undivided loyalty to Malaya. As the Malays are handicapped and backward in the economic, cultural and educational fields, all Malayan citizens are duty-bound to give them special and sincere assistance." See Sin Chew Jit Poh, March 10, 1947, 6. The same view was expressed time and again by Sir Tan Cheng Lock and the AMCJA which he led in the post-war years. See his Malayan Problems from a Chinese Point of View (Singapore: Tannisco, 1947), passim. Lee Kuan Yew, the champion of a Malaysian Malaysia in the mid 1960's, also admitted that every Malaysian had an obligation "to give special attention to the economic and social uplift of the Malays and the other indigenous people in Sabah and Sarawak." See his The Battle for a Malaysian Malaysia (1) (Singapore: Ministry of Culture, 1965), 20-21.

<sup>22</sup>See S. M. Huang-Thio, "Constitutional Discrimination under the Malaysian Constitution", Malaya Law Review, 6, 1 (July 1964), 1-16.



the Malays regarded it as a natural and "sacred" right inherent in their claim that they were the sons of the soil. One Malay Rajah wrote in 1945:

The grant of this sacred privilege to any people of different nationality, language, religion and custom, would be beyond the understanding and imagination of any Malay of normal mentality. The demand for further and higher status and complete equality with the sons of the soil is unacceptable.<sup>23</sup>

While the Malays were concerned with superior claim rather than mere economic protection, the non-Malays emphasized that protective measures should be given solely on the consideration of economic needs. Since poverty knew no racial barriers, the non-Malays argued, equal protection should also be given to those non-Malays who were economically and educationally as handicapped as the Malays. They also held that the policy of giving special privileges to the weaker members of the Malayan society was "a matter for internal administration and not something to be written into the constitution" as a special right.<sup>24</sup> To the Malays, however, the non-Malay argument was not only irrelevant but also illegitimate, because the Federation was originally conceived as a Malay

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<sup>23</sup>See The Straits Times, December 1, 1945, 1, 2, 4.

<sup>24</sup>Memorandum of the United Chinese School Teachers' Association of Malaya presented to the Reid Constitutional Commission in 1956. See The Straits Times, August 30, 1956, 7 for the view expressed by Mr. Lim Lian Geok, the President of the above association.





state with Malay supremacy as its national base. To them, their special position was, in actual fact, not a form of protection, but an assertion of their superior claim as bumiputra (sons of the soil), a claim which, as will be seen later, was based purely on racial origin.

The fact that the policy enunciated by General Templer in 1952 was, to the Malays, a manifestation of the Malay superior claim as the owners of the country rather than a protective measure based on economic needs was reaffirmed by subsequent political development in Malaya and Malaysia. First, if the real purpose of conferring special privileges to the Malays was to better equip them for self-reliance and free competition with the more advanced and modern sector of the non-Malay communities, it can be reasonably assumed that once parity was achieved, these special privileges should cease, since the reason for their continuation no longer existed. It was in this state of mind that the 1956-57 Constitutional Commission recommended that the special privileges of the Malays be reviewed by parliament every 15 years with a view to their eventual abolition.<sup>25</sup> However,

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<sup>25</sup>The Commission was made up entirely of non-Malayans: Lord Reid (the head of the Commission), Mr. W. J. McKell (Australia), Mr. B. Malik (India), Mr. Justice Abdul Hamid (Pakistan), and Sir Ivor Jennings (United Kingdom). It is also known as the Reid Commission. One of the Commission's terms of reference was to provide for the "safeguarding of the special position of the Malays and the legitimate interests of the other communities." In setting a time limit for reviewing the Malay special rights, the Commission observed that "We found it difficult ... to reconcile the terms of our reference if



this recommendation was rejected by the UMNO. Tunku Abdul Rahman, the Chief Minister of the Federation and President of the UMNO, declared that the Reid Report "has overlooked provision for the Malays ...

[and] caused some fear on the part of the Malays."<sup>26</sup> He indicated that the UMNO would never compromise on the question of Malay special position<sup>27</sup> and warned that "It is well to remember that no natives of any country in the world have given away so much as the Malays have done."<sup>28</sup>

As a result, the proposal of the Reid Commission on the question of a time limit to Malay special rights was not accepted in the final draft

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the protection of the special position of the Malays signified the granting of special privileges, permanently, to one community and not to others." See Great Britain, Colonial Office, Report of the Federation of Malaya Constitutional Commission (London: H.M.S.O., 1957, Colonial No. 330), 70-71.

<sup>26</sup>The Tunku's speech at a dinner in Malacca. See The Straits Times, March 18, 1957, 7. The Straits Times disagreed with the Tunku. In its editorial, it wrote: "The Reid Commission, however, did not overlook the rights of the Malays. Recommendations for safe-guarding Malay rights were part of its terms of reference. It did see some difficulty in reconciling special rights with 'the legitimate interests of other communities', if at the same time there is to be a common nationality for the whole of the Federation and a democratic form of government. One of the fundamental rights of democracy is the equality of all citizens before the law, regardless of race, creed or culture. The Commission, the majority that is, got over this problem by proposing arrangements for the continuation of present privileges, although recommending that they should not be made permanent. After fifteen years there should be a review of the quotas for government appointments. The chief lapse from the terms of reference is the limitation of the safeguard to fifteen years, which the Commission justified by interpreting the Alliance memorandum to suit its recommendation." The Straits Times, March 19, 1957, 6.

<sup>27</sup>The Straits Times, September 24, 1956, 1.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., April 23, 1956, 7.





of the 1957 constitution. Instead, the Conference of Rulers was empowered to veto any attempt to abolish the preferential treatment given to the Malays (Article 159(5)). Since it is inconceivable that the Malay rulers would be eager to give their assent to the amendment of those provisions conferring special privileges to the Malays, it would seem that Malay special position is to form a center of interests which will tend to perpetuate itself in the Malaysian political scene.<sup>29</sup> Now that Malay special rights have constitutionally been made one of the "sensitive issues" which cannot be questioned by anyone either inside or outside the parliament, they are, in fact, now "above politics" and beyond any challenge through constitutional means.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>The constitution provides that any amendment of those articles relating to the special position of the Malays requires the consent of the Conference of Rulers although only a two-third majority of both Houses of Parliament sitting separately on the second and third reading is necessary for the amendment of other articles of the constitution. In supporting this provision, Tan Siew Sin, the then Minister of Finance, said: "I have no doubt in my mind whatever that when the time comes, the Malays themselves will ask for its abolition, but this is a matter which we must obviously leave to them to decide." See Federation of Malaya, Legislative Council, Official Report of Debates, October 1956-August 1957, 2871. However, a system of preferential treatment is bound to create strong vested interests which will resist its abolition. Moreover, Mr. Tan also overlooked the fact that in the mind of the Malays their special position was conceived as a natural right rather than a measure of economic protection. Article 159(5) itself was made unamendable without the consent of the Conference of Rulers through a constitutional amendment passed by the Dewan Ra'ayat on March 3, 1971. See footnote below.

<sup>30</sup>For details of these constitutional changes, see Constitution (Amendment) White Paper (Kuala Lumpur: Government Press, January 22, 1971); and The Strait Times, January 23, 1971, and March 1-8, 1971.





The scope of preferential treatment traditionally given to the Malays was constitutionally extended in 1957 to embrace the field of military service (Article 8(5)(f)),<sup>30</sup> because in that year Malaya became independent and had full control over its national defence. As embodied in the Constitution of Malaysia in 1963, Malay special privileges now include (1) the reservation for the Malays in such proportion as the Yang di-Pertuan Agong (Supreme Head) "may deem reasonable" of positions in the public services,<sup>31</sup> of scholarships and other similar educational and training facilities, and the grants of trading licences (Article 153(2-3)); (2) the reservation of land for alienation to the Malays (Article 89, 90); and (3) the restriction of enlistment in the Royal Malay Regiments to the Malays. The proportion reserved in favor of the Malays in these fields (except the Royal Malay Regiments which are restricted exclusively for the Malays) is not fixed but depends on the judgment of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

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<sup>30</sup>Article 8(5)(f) provides that the constitutional principle of equality before the law and equal protection of the law "does not invalidate or prohibit any provision restricting enlistment in the Malay Regiment to Malays." A high proportion is reserved for Malay recruits in other types of armed forces and the police and security forces. Not until the May 13th riots in 1969 did the Malay special right in this field catch the attention of some students of Malaysian politics. K. J. Ratnam (op. cit., 102-116) failed to mention this most important Malay privilege in his discussion of the special position of the Malays. Nor is there any specific reference to it in R. S. Milne, Government and Politics in Malaysia (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1967).

<sup>31</sup>Public services (Article 132(1)) are defined to include: the armed forces; the judicial and legal service; the general public service of the Federation; the police force; the railway service; the joint services of the Federation and one or more of the states; and the public service of each state.



Traditionally, the "four-to-one ratio" in favor of the Malays was implemented; but, in actual fact, the proportion of Malays in the top echelon of the Malaysian Civil Service, foreign service and the police and armed forces is much higher.<sup>32</sup>

Furthermore, as these reserved fields (except those which are of an economic and educational nature) are directly related to the ruling function of the political system, the Malays tend to see their special position not so much as a form of protection as an expression of their right to rule. Enche Senu bin Abdul Rahman (the then Minister of Information and Broadcasting) was certainly influenced by this tendency when he said in 1965: "there is no party that can rule over us [Malays], but on the contrary, we [meaning the UMNO] have the right to rule over them [the non-Malays]."<sup>33</sup> The frustration of the non-Malays is not, therefore, based on the fact that they cannot reach the top of the public services now, but on their deep-rooted fear that the Malays' special rights carry the implication of the Malay right to rule permanently, which would shatter all non-Malay hope for sharing political power of the country with the Malays in the future.

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<sup>32</sup>In 1962, 50 out of the top 53 in the Malayan Civil Service were Malays. See Robert O. Tilman, "Policy Formulation, Policy Execution, and the Political Elite Structure of Contemporary Malaya" in Wang Gungwu (ed.), Malaysia: A Survey (New York: Praeger, 1964), 352. The Malay percentage in the public services is increasing rapidly in recent years both because Malays have been the chief replacements for retiring expatriate officers and because there has been increasing pressure from the Malay community for the Malayization of these services. Supra, 74-75, 90-95.

<sup>33</sup>Utusan Melayu, March 30, 1965.





Finally, if economic backwardness and indigeneity are the sole considerations in giving preferential treatment, the indigenous peoples in Sarawak and Sabah and the Orang Asli in the peninsula should be treated as the Malays' equals. But, in actual fact, the privileges conferred on them are confined either to the fields of public services and business licences in the case of the indigenous population in East Malaysia or to a statement of intention to provide special protection in the case of the Orang Asli in West Malaysia.<sup>34</sup>

To the Malays, their special position is based on the fact of prior residence or bumiputraisim. But, as seen earlier in this study,<sup>35</sup> bumiputraisim is primarily a racial concept. It is now well-known that with the exception of the natives, both the Malays and the Chinese and Indians are descendants of earlier immigrants from Indonesia, China and India. While it is true that Malay immigration had taken place prior to the arrival of the Chinese and Indians, a majority of the

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<sup>34</sup>According to Article 161A (1-2) of the Malaysian constitution, privileges granted to the "natives" of the Borneo states are limited to the fields of public services and business licences. Scholarships, exhibitions and other educational or training privileges and facilities are not included. As regards the Orang Asli in Malaya, Article 8(5)(c) states that the constitution does not prohibit "any provision for the protection, wellbeing or advancement of the aboriginal peoples of the Malay peninsula (including the reservation of land) or the reservation to aborigines of a reasonable proportion of suitable positions in the public service." Here no specific mention of educational facilities and business licences is made. Nor is there any provision regarding their rights in the military service.

<sup>35</sup>Supra, 118-127.



ancestors of the present Malay population entered the country approximately at the same time as the Chinese and Indians. C. A. Vlieland, a leading member of the Federal Secretariat of the Federated Malay States, wrote in 1934:

less than 60 per cent of the present Malay population is of over 40 years' standing in the peninsula. But actually the long-standing Malay population must be even smaller than these figures suggest, as a large number of immigrants and their peninsular-born children ultimately return to their country of origin and there is a continuous process of substitution going on. It is clear that only a negligible fraction of the Malay population consists of descendants of pre-nineteenth-century immigrants and that more than half of it has less than 50 years' prescriptive right to the title "owners of the soil". The Malays are, in fact, merely immigrants of generally longer standing than the other migrant races represented in the peninsula and are in no sense an autochthonous population.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>C. A. Vlieland, "The Population of the Malay Peninsula: A Study in Human Migration", The Geographical Review, 24, 1 (January 1934), 64-65. Vlieland's assessment was based on a comparison of the census figures of 1891 and 1931. Vlieland was the Superintendent of the 1931 Census Report. See also his "The 1947 Census of Malaya", Pacific Affairs, 22 (March 1949), 59-63. Commenting on the Malayan Union plan, Vlieland (then ex-Secretary for Defence of the United Kingdom) said: "In fact ... the Malays are of immigrant stock, and the bulk of the 'Malay' population today is either immigrants or the result of quite recent immigrations. This is because British, Chinese and Indians have created a country which Malaysians [formerly "Malaysian" referred to the Malay race in a wider sense] of the Archipelago evidently consider a country fit for them to live in." But he pointed





Despite the fact that the degree of indigeneity of the Malay community in Malaysia has been as "sensitive" an issue as the question of Malay special position,<sup>37</sup> Vlieland's statement is indeed a fair assessment. "Therefore", Lee Kuan Yew, the Prime Minister of Singapore, said in 1965 before Singapore's separation, "it is wrong and illogical for a particular racial group to think that they are more justified to be called Malaysians and that the others can become Malaysians only through their favor."<sup>38</sup>

In the second place, if indigeneity or prior residence were the sole criterion, the bumiputra (sons of the soil) or "owners" of Malaysia could be none other than the Orang Asli in the peninsula and the natives in the Borneo states. In practice, however, bumiputraism

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out that the danger for Malaya "lies in the fact that the fiction of the Malay birth-right dies hard, for on that precarious foundation the whole monstrous structure of Malay privilege has been built." See The Straits Times, November 29, 1949, 2. For others' view on the issue, see Tunku Shamsul Bahrin, "The Pattern of Indonesian Immigration and Settlement in Malaya", Asian Studies, 5, 2 (August 1967), 233-257; C. A. Fisher, "The Problem of Malayan Unity in Its Geographical Setting" in R. W. Steel and C. A. Fisher (eds.), Geographical Essays on British Tropical Lands (London: George Philip and Son, Ltd., 1956), 289, 313; and supra, 188, note 79.

<sup>37</sup>Supra, 50, note 1. In 1965, when Lee Kuan Yew questioned the indigenous status of the Malay community, he provoked a widespread Malay protest. The secretary-general of the UMNO, Syed Ja'afar Albar, a pre-war Indonesian immigrant himself, described Lee's statements as "a slap in the face of the Malays" and stated that "if the Government allows such provocations to continue", the Malays would "lose their patience" because "to say that the Malays are like the other races in this country and that they have no extra right in calling this country their homeland is an insult to the Malay race." See The Straits Times, May 6, 1965, 18.

<sup>38</sup>The Straits Times, May 5, 1965, 6.





has been equated with Malayism. Regardless of the length of residence in Malaysia, all Malays are bumiputra, whereas a Chinese, an Indian or a European, however long his ancestors may have settled in Malaysia and his own standing as a Malaysian citizen, is not a bumiputra, and, as seen above, the special privileges given the Orang Asli and the natives - the genuine sons of the soil - under the constitution are less extensive than those given the Malays.

It is clear that although Malay special position is claimed to be based on the fact of indigeneity, it is a form of discrimination built, not upon such rational criteria as economic and cultural needs and citizenship qualifications, but upon racial differentiations. The real rationale for the bumiputra/non-bumiputra division, however, is to be found in the long-standing belief of the Malays that Malaysia is a Malay country. Although the country has become a multicultural and multiracial one since large-scale non-Malay immigration took place, the Malay population as a whole has never been resocialized to accept this fact. In actuality, they have been conditioned by British policy and other political crises to continue to regard themselves as the owners of the country. Moreover, such belief has also created a system of vested interests in the Malay community which tend to resist any changes that will affect the status of the Malays as bumiputra. Thus, the Malay demand for special privileges is only one expression of the general

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Malay urge to build a Malay Malaysia. As will be seen in the next section, the Malay demand for cultural supremacy also fulfils the same function.

### Multiculturalism or Monoculturalism

It was suggested earlier that there was little or nothing in the cultural and symbolic aspects of the Malaysian political system that indicated the existence of a non-Malay in the society.<sup>39</sup> "In Malaysia today", writes Felix V. Gagliano, Jr.,

the Malays are clearly the politically dominant ethnic group and, consequently, the dominant model held up for emulation and imitation by the Malay-dominated leadership is a Malay political culture. While it is rationalized in terms of blending all cultures into a Malaysian identity in an equalitarian multi-racial political order, there is no denying that the Malay political elite expect non-Malays to do most of the changing.<sup>40</sup>

This fact comes clearly to light if one examines the constitutional provisions and Malay attitudes regarding the state religion, national language, education and other cultural and symbolic aspects of the political system.

Against the recommendation of the Reid Commission, Islam was established as the state religion of the Federation of Malaya in 1957

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<sup>39</sup>Supra, 88.

<sup>40</sup>Felix V. Gagliano, Jr., Political Input Functions in the Federation of Malaysia (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Illinois, 1967), 123.





(Article 3(1)).<sup>41</sup> In a communal society where no single community commands an absolute-majority status and the horizontal ties among members of the different communities are weak, the establishment of the religion of one communal group as the official religion of the state is bound to produce far-reaching political consequences. In Malaysia, the establishment of the Malay-Muslim faith as the state religion of the Federation has reaffirmed and strengthened the Malay character of the country. On the one hand, it serves as an instrument through which the Malays try to assert their cultural supremacy; and on the other, it has intensified the non-Malay pressure for cultural equality.

In Malaysia, although the Muslims constitute the largest single religious group, the dividing line between the Muslims and the non-Muslims coincides closely with the distinction between the Malays and the non-Malays, because the Malay-Muslims not only numerically predominate, but also have organizational and leadership control over, the Muslim community. As the Muslim faith constitutes a vital ingredient of Malay culture and Malay identity,<sup>42</sup> the establishment of Islam as the official faith has great identitive meaning and significance only

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<sup>41</sup> Despite the recommendation of the Alliance that Islam be established as the state religion, the Reid Commission decided not to make any provision on the matter. See Report of the Constitutional Commission, op. cit., 73. But the view of the Reid Commission was rejected in the final constitution.

<sup>42</sup> See supra, 105-111. For literature on the Muslim faith in Malaysian politics, see supra, 105, note 71.



to the Malays and other Muslim communities.<sup>43</sup> As a system of belief and way of life, the Malay-Muslim faith is the most important source of fraternity, solidarity and integration among the Malays, a source which strengthens Malay exclusivity and religious and racial distinctiveness from the rest of the society.<sup>44</sup> As Malay political culture is essentially a Malay-Muslim culture, the acceptance of the Malay-Muslim religion, which is the core-ingredient of Malay-Muslim culture in general, endows the Malaysian political system with a Malay-Muslim characteristic which is, unfortunately, totally alien to the non-Muslim half of the population.

The symbolic significance of establishing the Malay-Muslim faith as the official religion of Malaysia is manifested in a number of ways. It is reflected in the position accorded to the ruler of each of the nine traditional sultanates as the guardian of the Muslim faith for his Muslim subjects. As the office of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong (the Supreme Head of the Federation) is not separated from the religious leadership of the Muslim community, it is made constitutionally impossible for the Governors of Penang, Malacca and Sarawak, and the Yang di-Pertuan Negara of Sabah (whose status as heads of state

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<sup>43</sup>For a discussion of the identitive power of the Malay-Muslim cultural model, see infra, Chapter VII.

<sup>44</sup>Supra, 105-111.



of these component units is equivalent to that of the other nine sultans) to become the Supreme Head of the Federation because these posts are not hereditary and may be occupied by non-Muslims.<sup>45</sup> While the ruler of each of the nine peninsular states is the bulwark of Malay tradition, religion and culture, the Supreme Head of the Federation, selected from the nine rulers for a five-year term on the basis of seniority, is the protector of the special position of the Malays (Article 153(1)).<sup>46</sup> Although the Supreme Head has also the responsibility to safeguard "the legitimate interests of other communities", what really constitutes these "legitimate interests" are not well

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<sup>45</sup> Each ruler of the nine traditional sultanates is the head of the Muslim religion in his own state but he may authorize the Supreme Head to represent him in any acts, observances or ceremonies with respect to which the Conference of Rulers has agreed that they should be extended to the Federation as a whole (Article 3(2)). The Supreme Head is the head of the Muslim faith in his own state (Article 34(1)) and in Malacca and Penang (Article 3(3)). There is no provision regarding Sabah and Sarawak in this matter but the propagation of any religious doctrine or beliefs among Muslims in these two Borneo states is forbidden (Article 161(D)). The Governors of Penang, Malacca, and Sarawak, and the Yang di-Pertuan Negara of Sabah, are appointed by the Supreme Head after consulting the chief ministers of the respective states. They are also members of the Conference of Rulers (Majlis Raja-Raja) but for some purposes the Conference is confined to the nine royal rulers only (Fifth Schedule (7)). At present, all the appointed Governors and Yang di-Pertuan Negara are Muslims.

<sup>46</sup> Supra, 304-305. Article 153(3) provides that the Supreme Head may give general directive to any authority or Commission to ensure that an adequate number of scholarships, exhibitions, etc., and position in the public service is reserved for Malays and his directive must be complied with. Article 38(5) states that the Conference of Rulers must be consulted before any change in policy affecting administrative action under Article 153 is made.





defined and still remain ambiguous.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, no law or constitutional amendment affecting Malay special position in general and the privileges, position, honors or dignities of the rulers can be passed by the parliament without the assent of the Conference of Rulers<sup>48</sup> (Article 159(5) and 38(4-5)). The position and rights of each ruler in his own state are also guaranteed by the Federation (Article 71(1)). Like Malay special position, these privileges and status of the Malay rulers have now been made in recent constitutional amendments one of the "sensitive issues" and can no longer be questioned by the public either inside or outside the parliament.<sup>49</sup>

It is thus clear that the symbolic leadership roles in Malaysia are directly related to the Malay-Muslim tradition and culture.

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<sup>47</sup>Under Article 153(4) and (7-10), no person shall be deprived of what he has already had or enjoyed by any action taken for the purpose of reservations of quotas in respect of services, business permits, scholarships and other training facilities for the Malays. In this sense, the meaning of "legitimate interests" of other communities is rather limited. Article 152(1)(a-b) is designed to guarantee the legitimate interests of the non-Malays in the cultural fields but as will be seen shortly, it is a negative rather than a positive guarantee.

<sup>48</sup>For an analysis of the role of the Supreme Head and the organization and functions of the Conference of Rulers, see F. A. Trindade and S. Jayakumar, "The Supreme Head of the Malaysian Federation", Malaya Law Review, 6, 2 (December 1964), 280-302; Harry E. Groves, The Constitution of Malaysia (Singapore: Malaysia Publications Ltd., 1964), 50-59; and L. A. Sheridan and Harry E. Groves, Constitution of Malaysia (New York: Oceana Publications, Inc., 1966).

<sup>49</sup>Supra, 303, note 30.



While loyalty to the rulers as the religious leaders of the Malay community and the heads of the Malay states has been an integral part of the Malay-Muslim way of life, a tradition of affective attachment to the Malay sultans has never developed among the non-Muslim half of the population. Within the present constitutional structure, the Malay rulers and the Supreme Head are assigned with functions specifically related to the protection and perpetuation of Malay special privileges and political and cultural supremacy. To the non-Muslim citizens, the Supreme Head (and the rulers) appears to be the champion of the primordial interests of the Malay community rather than a symbol of unity and nationhood.<sup>50</sup>

Meanwhile, other national symbols of Malaysia also bear direct relationships with Malay-Muslim traditions and culture. The federal flag of the Federation, which is a symbol of identification and nationhood, pictures the Islamic star and crescent with the royal color (yellow) of the Malay rulers, whereas the federal arms contain

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<sup>50</sup>In fact, the Malay rulers played a great part in formulating the framework for a Malay Malaya during the constitutional negotiations after the Second World War. See The Straits Times, editorial, July 25, 1947, 4. Commenting on the 1957 Malayan constitution, J. Norman Parmer wrote: "the constitution contains little which looks forward to the eventual abolition of the Malay Sultanates. While a single monarchy is probably well-suited to Malaya, considerable doubt can be expressed about the value of the nine state thrones. The Rulers have virtually no support among non-Malays and no wide support among the Malay people except as religious leaders and as shields against encroachments by non-Malays. ... the problem is ... that the Malay people may, for communal purposes, some day shelter behind these anachronistic symbols." See his "Constitutional Change in Malaya's Plural Society", Far Eastern Survey, 26 (October 1957), 150. See also Robert O. Tilman, "Malaysia: The Problems of Federation", Western Political Quarterly, 16, 4 (December 1963), 905.





krisses (in royal color) representing the traditional profession of the Malay rulers and two tigers as supporters. The national language is Malay<sup>51</sup> and the national anthem is a traditional Malay song praying for "a successful reign" of the Ruler and God's blessing.<sup>52</sup> The national mosque in Kuala Lumpur, the rapid expansion of mosque construction throughout the country and the wide publicity among the Malays concerning government activities in promoting Malay-Muslim interests are symbolic of Malaysia's devotion to the Malay-Muslim faith.<sup>53</sup> On

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<sup>51</sup>The utilitarian and identitive power of Malay as the national language is discussed in Chapter VII.

<sup>52</sup>The two key sentences in the national anthem are: "May God bestow blessing and happiness. May our Ruler have a successful reign."

<sup>53</sup>Early in 1966, the federal government announced that it had built more than 2,000 Muslim schools, mosques, and prayer houses since independence in 1957. See Charles F. Gallagher, "Contemporary Islam: A Frontier of Communalism - Aspects of Islam in Malaysia", American Universities Field Staff Report: Southeast Asia Series, 14, 10 (May 1966), 16. Opening a new mosque in Alor Star in 1968, Tunku Abdul Rahman declared that in Kedah alone 390 mosques had been built since 1957. He said "no other Muslim country has done so much for Islam". See The Straits Times, November 16, 1968. Also indicative of the general orientation of Malay thinking on the issue of the Malay-Muslim faith is the following: (1) the annual spectacular staging in the Merdeka Stadium in Kuala Lumpur of Kuran-recital contests both on a national and an international levels; (2) the wide publicity given to the government-sponsored pilgrimage to Mecca (see, for example, the report in the Straits Times, February 29, 1968, 9, and in the Utusan Melayu of the same date); (3) an overwhelming emphasis has been given to Malay-Muslim education and the promotion of religious study in Malay schools; and (4) the display of increasing interest in affairs of the Islamic world. The International Islamic Conference was held in Kuala Lumpur just before the May riots in 1969 (see Far Eastern Economic Review, May 8, 1969, 326) and now Tunku Abdul Rahman heads the Secretariat of this organization. On the issue of pil-



official ceremonial occasions, like the opening of Parliament, Malay-Muslim tradition is followed and Muslim prayers are recited. This entire symbolic apparatus is derived solely from Malay political culture and there is nothing in it to suggest that the non-Muslim half of the population has been accepted as an integral element of the Malaysian nation.

Although religious freedom is guaranteed by the constitution (Article 11(1-3)), the propagation of any other religious doctrine or belief among the Muslims is prohibited (Article 11(4) and Article 161(D)). It is also provided that "federal law may provide for special aid for the establishment or maintenance of Muslim institutions or the instruction in Muslim religion of persons professing that religion" (Article 12(2)). The states are given control over the Muslim faith and over persons professing that faith. No law dealing with any question of Muslim law or Malay custom may be made by the federal parliament without consultation with the government of the state or states concerned.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, the state constitutions

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grimage to Mecca, Ghafar Baba, the then Minister of National and Rural Development, declared that the number of Malaysian Muslims who had gone to Mecca exceeded that of any other Muslim countries in the world. In 1969, a total of 9,000 Malay Muslims completed the pilgrimage, an increase of 2,000 from the previous year. He said, in 1969 the pilgrimage Fund had received M\$600,000 monthly, but in January 1970 alone, it received M\$1,340,000 from contributors. See Sin Chew Jit Poh, February 14, 1970, 10.

<sup>54</sup>The first section of List II, the State List, of the Ninth Schedule, Legislative Lists of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia gives such control to the states. The affairs and prescriptions of Islam are





of the nine sultanate states also rule that the Mentri Besar (Chief Minister) of the state government must be a person "of the Malay race" and who "professes the Muslim religion".<sup>55</sup> These provisions create another field of Malay privileges and an area of exclusively Malay-Muslim concern which is beyond the power of any federal or state elected body to introduce modernizing changes and adaptations. Most importantly, the Malays as a whole tend to take their religious privileges as a recognition that Malaysia is a Malay country. In the last fifteen years, the Muslim character of the state has been emphasized by the Malay-dominated government "to a point where the religion of one community becomes more than the official state religion and is seen as an inherent part of the entire national personality."<sup>56</sup> To the Malays, multiculturalism has no place in a Malay

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controlled and enforced under the aegis of the Sultan by a body usually known as the Council of Islamic Religion and Malay Custom (Majlis Ugama Islam dan Adat Istiadat Melayu), although in the four states of Negri Sembilan, Penang, Malacca, and Kedah there is no provision made for handling Malay custom. These Councils have independent legislative power and are not controlled by the states' legislative assemblies. Therefore, Muslim affairs, unlike other religions, are beyond popular control in Malaysia.

<sup>55</sup>In the general elections of May 1969, this issue arose in the states of Selangor and Perak where a situation of stalemate was created in the state assemblies. The former DAP leader Goh Hock Guan indicated his intention to test the legal implications of the state constitution but the racial riots in May 13 changed the entire situation. See The Straits Times, May 13, 1969.

<sup>56</sup>Charles F. Gallagher, op. cit., 15. See also supra, 105, note 71. For an account of "what Malaysia has done for the religion of Islam", see Tunku Abdul Rahman, May 13: Before and After, op. cit., 38-43.





country.

The rejection of multilingualism and the acceptance of Malay as the sole national language have made the Malay character of the country almost complete.<sup>57</sup> Like Islam, the Malay language is

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The Tunku showed satisfaction that "our achievements for the religion of Islam this day and age far exceed our wildest dreams" (*ibid.* 39). Among the examples he referred to as "our achievements" were: (1) "all the old mosques and places of worship" have been replaced "at great cost to the Government and the country"; (2) many religious schools have been provided, and Arabic, the "language of the Koran", has been taught in these schools; (3) free food to the people during the fasting month; (4) annual arrangements of Koran competitions since 1960 for which "Malaysia has received great praise, being held in an esteem in the world of Islam accorded to no other Muslim country except to Saudi Arabia, the home of Mecca and Medina"; and (5) the "historic" Conference of Islamic Nations held in Kuala Lumpur in April 1969 was, to the Tunku, "almost as important as the achievement of independence for Malaya." These measures, the Tunku said, were designed "to win the hearts and minds of all the devout Muslims in the country." (*Ibid.*, 39; emphasis added). However, it should be noted that these measures have no appeal at all to the non-Muslim portion of the population. In some cases, the Malay feeling of ritual distinctiveness is carried to its extreme. For example, the sale of pork in the canteens or cafeteria in all schools is prohibited. This prohibition also applies to those Chinese schools which have no Muslim students. The provision of pork for the consumption of school canteens' personnel is not permitted. See Sin Chew Jit Poh, March 31, 1969, 10; and April 2, 1969, 12.

<sup>57</sup>Early in 1955, the Federal Legislative Council passed a resolution introduced by Party Negara declaring that "The national language of the Federation shall be Malay, whatever other official language may have to be used from time to time in this country." See The Straits Times, April 1, 1955, 7. In the 1957 constitution, Malay was established as the bahasa kebangsaan (national language) of the Federation, whereas English was to continue as an official language for a period of 10 years after which the parliament was to decide its future. The two additional recommendations of the Reid Commission that for a period of 10 years there be a limited right for those members of a legislature not fluent in Malay or English to



an integral part of Malay identity - one of the defining characteristics of a "Malay". To the Malays, the establishment of Malay as the national language is seen more as a recognition of their superior claim as the sons of the soil than as an acknowledgement of the functional necessity for a common medium for communication across

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speak in a Chinese or Tamil language and no language qualification for candidates wishing to contest elections be imposed (Report of the Constitution Commission, op. cit., 74) were rejected in the final constitution. In 1963, when the Federation of Malaysia was formed, Malay was maintained as the national language while English was to continue as an official language in Sarawak and Sabah until 1973. In the 1967 National Language Act, which applied only to Malaya and not to the Borneo states, it was provided that Malay "shall be used for official purposes", although the Supreme Head "may permit the continued use of the English language for such official purposes as may be deemed fit" (Clauses 2 and 4). The first directive of the Supreme Head set out 9 approved fields for the uses of English: 1. legal advice or opinion and correspondence pertaining to such advice or opinion relating to any law the authoritative text of which is English; 2. communication with foreign governments or international bodies where the use of English is unavoidable; 3. communication with international experts or consultants serving or under the employ of any government or statutory body within Malaysia; 4. training or examination where the approved course or approved text of any subject is English; 5. training carried out by foreign experts; 6. communication with locally recruited staff of Malaysian embassies; 7. in the ministry of health, report or instruction in respect of patients, prescription and post-operative instruction; 8. policy instruction or directive to the delegates of Malaysia while abroad where the use of English is unavoidable; and 9. in the internal revenue department, work in connection with assessment, computer and accounting, collection and investigation. For an analysis of the language problem in Malaysia, see Cynthia H. Enloe, Multi-Ethnic Politics: The Case of Malaysia (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1967), 74-210; J. A. MacDougall, Shared Burdens: A Study of Communal Discrimination by the Political Parties of Malaysia and Singapore (Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1968), 245-272; Margaret Roff, "The Politics of Language in Malaya", Asian Survey, 7, 5 (May 1967), 316-328; and R. B. Le Page, The National Language Question (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 63-76. See also supra, 12, note 21.





communal lines. As a matter of fact, the Malay-dominated government has been enforcing since the 1950's a unilingual policy aimed at making Malay not only the national language but also the only language in Malaysia. In recent years, all official announcements and Malay press have referred to the Malay language, not as the national language (Bahasa Kebangsaan), but as the Malaysian Language or the language of Malaysia (Bahasa Malaysia), implying that all other languages are alien languages.

It can thus be seen that the Malays as a whole tend to adopt an assimilative-spiritual interpretation of the language issue and to conceive political integration as assimilation to Malay culture and language. As seen earlier, this interpretation fails to differentiate between political and cultural attachments and tends to equate Chinese and Indian acceptance of the national language as their own language with loyalty to the country.<sup>58</sup> In introducing the National Language Bill in 1967, Tunku Abdul Rahman, the then Prime Minister, said:

the people of this country which consist of various races are bound together by the acceptance of a common language which will form the basis of loyalty to this country.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>For example, commenting on an English-language newspaper's view that it might be necessary to extend the use of English beyond the 1967 deadline, the chairman of the central executive committee of the National Language Month said: "to us there are only two groups. The group that is for the language, and the other that is against. There is no in-between group. Those for the language are with us. Those who are not with us are our enemies." See Malayan Times (Kuala Lumpur), July 30, 1962, 2.

<sup>59</sup>Speech on moving the second reading of the National Language Bill in



Although Clause 3 of the National Language Act stipulates that the federal government or any state government may "use any translation of official documents or communications in the language of any other community in the Federation for such purposes as may be deemed necessary in the public interest", the Tunku explained, "This power is only vested in the Government. Nobody has got the right to demand for it."<sup>60</sup> He added,

I would warn the non-Malays that there is no excuse for them not to learn the Malay language if they profess undivided loyalty to this country.<sup>61</sup>

In making these statements, the Tunku was committing himself to the approach of assimilative integration, which implies that only non-Malay speaking citizens are capable of disloyalty. According to this approach, the promotion of the Malay language as the national language, or more correctly in the mind of the Malays, as Bahasa Malaysia, necessarily entails the ultimate elimination of the languages of other communities,<sup>62</sup> and any non-Malay demand for multilingualism is neces-

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the Dewan Ra'ayat (House of Representatives) on March 2, 1967. See The National Language (Kuala Lumpur: Federal Department of Information, 1967), 11.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 4. A similar remark was made by Tun Abdul Razak, the then Deputy Prime Minister. See ibid., 16-17.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>62</sup>For example, the former Assistant Minister of National and Rural Development, Inche Suleiman bin Bulon, was reported to have said that the history of the other languages would end when the time





sarily a disloyal or subversive act. With the passage of the constitutional amendments on March 3, 1971, the question of the national language can no longer be discussed publicly in Malaysia.<sup>63</sup>

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came for the national language to be the sole official language of the country. "At that time", he added, "our nation will constitute a genuine Malay nation." See Utusan Melayu, August 24, 1966.

<sup>63</sup>For details, see sources in supra, 303, note 30. The view that non-Malay demand for multilingualism is a disloyal or subversive act is frequently expressed by both the Malay elite and the Malay press. For example, in 1966, the Sultan of Perak said that those who sought to establish Chinese as one of the official languages should be punished. He added, "the rights of the Chinese and Indians are already determined by the government" (see Utusan Melayu, November 21, 1966). Similarly, the Minister of Lands and Mines in 1966 described Chinese language exponents as "Mao Tse Tung's Agents" (supra, 283, note 141). Before the passage of the National Language Bill in 1967, the President of the United Chinese School Teachers' Association, Mr. Sim Mow Yu, was agitating for a more liberal use of the Chinese language in the country without demanding an official status for it, and he was expelled from the MCA in which he was the deputy head of the MCA Youth Section. Commenting on the event, the Utusan Melayu said Sim's action "is contrary to what is laid down in the constitution, and should not be carried out by a loyal citizen" (October 20, 1966). In January 1966, two Tamil teachers in Kuala Lumpur started a hunger strike to draw attention to their demand that the Lower Certificate Examination should also be conducted in Tamil as well. As regards this strike, Inche Yahya bin Ismail, the President of the Malaysian National Language Action Front, said: "The Government should not give in even an inch to the communal demand of the hunger strikers. This is the proper time for the Government to examine the citizenship laws and take action against such undesirable people in our midst" (Tamil Nesan (Kuala Lumpur), January 16, 1966). In response, the Utusan Melayu wrote: "We consider the demand of the Tamil teachers as a challenge to their loyalty to this country and its sovereignty" (January 20, 1966). By the same token, the Utusan Zaman (the Sunday version of the Utusan Melayu) wrote: "The Government must act firmly ... We have given much but receive very little. In this connection, it is appropriate that the Chairman of the National Language Action Committee should urge the Government to review the citizenship of the members of the Tamil Teachers' Association" (January 23, 1966). Perhaps, most indicative of the Malay





The monocultural approach of integration is also reflected in the attitude of the Malay-dominated government toward education. The Barnes Report on Malay Education in 1951, which formed the basic framework of official policy on education for the last two decades, made it sufficiently clear that language and loyalty were conceived to be inseparable. It declared

We have set up bilingualism in Malay and English as its [the education policy's] objective because we believe

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thought on the national language issue is the case of Mr. Lim Lian Geok, the President of the United Chinese School Teachers' Association (1952-1961), who was deprived of his citizenship and teaching permit in 1961. Mr. Lim was an outspoken critic of the government policy on Chinese schools and the Chinese language and a leading champion for the objective of making Chinese and Tamil two of the official languages. The reasons given for the deprivation of his citizenship were that he had shown himself, "since 1957, by act and speech to be disloyal and disaffected towards the Federation of Malaya, in that [he] did make (a) deliberate misrepresentation and inversion of Governmental Educational Policy in a manner calculated to excite disaffection against the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and the Government of the Federation; and (b) emotional appeals of an extreme communal nature calculated to promote feelings of ill-will and hostility between different races in the federation likely to cause violence" (see The Straits Times, August 17, 1961, 1). Mr. Lim challenged the validity of the deprivation Notice by way of legal proceedings. He finally took his case to its final stage by appealing to the Privy Council in England but the appeal was dismissed. See S. Jayakumar, "Deprivation of Citizenship: Lim Lian Geok v. Minister of the Interior, Federation of Malaya", Malaya Law Review, 6, 1 (July 1964), 178-181. For Chinese reaction, see the Chinese Teachers' Association publication Teachers' Journal, 3, 1 (June 15, 1961, 11th Issue), which contains a number of comments on the issue. Lim Lian Geok's criticisms of government's educational policy can be partly found in his book, hui-yi p'en-p'en lu (Kuala Lumpur: United Chinese School Teachers' Association, 1963). The book was the first part of Lim's memoir which was banned by the government and the publication of the rest of his memoir was suspended. An examination of his book would reveal that he was only expressing the genuine desire of a community for a more equitable status for its language. He was far more moderate than the Utusan Melayu in his presentation.



that all parents who regard Malaya as their permanent home and the object of their undivided loyalty will be happy to have their children educated in these languages. If any parents were not happy about this, their unhappiness would properly be taken as an indication that they did not so regard Malaya.<sup>64</sup>

This Report was thus committed to the view that "a common Malayan nationality" could be created only through the use of Malay or English as the medium of instruction in all schools.<sup>65</sup> This view was closely followed in subsequent legislations in the field of education.<sup>66</sup> At

<sup>64</sup> Federation of Malaya, Report of the Committee on Malay Education (The Barnes Report), (Kuala Lumpur: Government Press, 1951), 24. Nine out of the fourteen-man committee were Malays and the rest were British. All the witnesses interviewed included no Chinese or Indians. Its terms of reference were concerned with Malay education but it made recommendations concerning Chinese and Tamil schools.

<sup>65</sup> The Barnes Report suggested the termination of government aid to Chinese and Indian vernacular schools. In their place, national schools would be formed to accept "pupils of all races" who would be taught in "only two languages", i.e., Malay and English. It stated that "all non-Malay parents who avail themselves of the new facilities, and who set aside their vernacular attachments in the interests of a new social unity, have a right to be welcome without reserve by the Malay people as fellow-builders and fellow-citizens". Op. cit., 24. Cultural pluralism was rejected. As the editorial of the Straits Times (June 13, 1951, 6) pointed out, "The Barnes Committee, although appointed to consider only Malay education, has been led to the conclusion that the Chinese and Indian vernacular schools should sacrifice on the altar of Malayan nationality, and that the Chinese and Indian communities should themselves perform that sacrifice." See The Straits Times, June 23, 1951, 10 for Indian views on the Report, and ibid., September 8, 1951, 1 and 3, for the comments of the Bishop of Singapore, Rt. Rev. Henry Baines.

<sup>66</sup> See Federation of Malaya, Report of the Education Committee 1956 (The Razak Report), (Kuala Lumpur: Government Press, 1956); idem,





present, only Malay and English are the two recognized media of instruction in the national and national-type schools at all levels, but plans have been made to terminate English as a recognized teaching medium in the near future. In fact, beginning in 1969, actual steps have been taken to change all the English national-type primary schools into Malay schools.<sup>67</sup>

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Report of the Education Review Committee 1960 (The Talib Report), (Kuala Lumpur: Government Press, 1960); Federation of Malaysia, Report of the Royal Commission on the Teaching Services, West Malaysia (The Aziz Report), (Kuala Lumpur: Government Press, 1969); and the Education Ordinances of 1952, 1957 and 1961, which were formulated to implement the Barnes Report, the Razak Report and the Talib Report respectively. The Razak Report set out the aim of educational policy which was to establish a national system of education in which all schools would use Malay as the medium of instruction. It proposed a common syllabus for all schools and a common examination. The Talib Report further stipulated that the common examination should be written in either Malay or English. It suggested that government aid to Chinese secondary schools be terminated unless they accepted to be converted into national-type secondary schools using English as the medium of instruction. The 1961 Education Ordinance was designed to carry out the suggestions of the Talib Report. It also empowered the Minister of Education to change all Chinese, English and Indian schools into Malay schools, i.e., national schools, at the appropriate time.

<sup>67</sup>The steps which have been taken are as follows: (1) Beginning in 1969, four of the subjects of the third-year class in the English-medium national-type primary schools - physical education, arts and crafts, local studies, and music - have been taught in Malay. (2) Starting from 1970, the subjects of history and geography in the fourth-year class have been given in Malay. (3) From 1971 on, Malay are the medium of instruction in science and mathematics of the fifth year class. See The Straits Times, November 25, 1967; and Sin Chew Jit Poh, March 28, 1969, 10. These measures have been taken without prior consultation with the students' parents or teachers. It was estimated that 80% of the teachers in the English schools are not able to teach in Malay. Beginning in 1970, common examinations administered by foreign institutions were replaced by a new system



It is true that Chinese and Tamil medium schools at the primary level are still recognized by the government and supported by government aid; but their future is filled with uncertainty. First, the Razak Report of 1956 made it clear that "the ultimate objective of educational policy in this country must be to bring together the children of all races under a national educational system in which the national language is the main medium of instruction."<sup>68</sup> In Clause 21(B) of the 1961 Education Ordinance, the Minister of Education is vested with the power to change the Chinese, English, and Indian national-type schools into Malay schools (i.e., national schools) "at the appropriate time"; and it is according to this authorization that the English national-type primary schools are now being transformed into Malay schools. Second, there is, at present, no government-recognized secondary school system using Chinese or Tamil as the major medium of instruction and examination. As a result of the Talib Report, most of the Chinese secondary schools have, since the early 1960's, been converted into national-type secondary schools using English as the teaching medium in all subjects except the Chinese language to qualify themselves for government aid. A few Chinese secondary schools which chose not to accept government aid remain as

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in which Malay was used as the main medium of examination. See Sin Chew Jit Poh, April 7, 1969, 10.

<sup>68</sup>The Razak Report, op. cit., 3. Malay schools are called national schools which receive government aid as of right, whereas all government-aided English, Chinese and Tamil schools are referred to as national-type schools.





independent Chinese secondary schools; but they have been under constant pressure of being closed down. On the one hand, they have been alleged to be the objects of Communist subversion.<sup>69</sup> On the other, they are also facing great financial difficulties, and because high school diplomas issued by them are not recognized by the government, these institutions except a few outstanding ones are in a process of phasing out. Under these circumstances, the graduates of the national-type Chinese and Tamil primary schools are left with little choice but to seek further studies in English-medium national-type secondary schools. Now that the English-medium schools are being transformed into Malay schools, they are facing a future in which they will have to join the Malay national schools.

The present policy of the government is thus aimed at establishing an educational system in which all schools will be using Bahasa Malaysia as the main teaching medium. Chinese-medium and Tamil-medium national-type primary schools are, nevertheless, still recognized by the government; but their continuing existence in the future is an

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<sup>69</sup>Article 152(1) of the Malaysian constitution provides that "no person shall be prohibited or prevented from using (otherwise than for official purposes), or from teaching or learning, any other language." This is not, however, an absolute guarantee, for the government can easily invoke the charge of Communist subversion to prevent the study of the Chinese language. In 1968, the government threatened to close down all the independent Chinese secondary schools on the ground that there was Communist subversion in these institutions. After the pleadings of the leading members of the Chinese community, the threat was withdrawn on the condition that the Board of Managers of these schools should guarantee that there would be no Communist subversion in the future. See Sin Chew Jit Poh, July 29, 1968, 9; August 2, 1968, 10; and August 7, 1968, 9.





open question in view of the power given to the Minister of Education under the 1961 Education Ordinance and the recent measures which have been taken to change the teaching medium in the English primary schools.<sup>70</sup> As pointed out by the representatives of the

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<sup>70</sup>The recently published Aziz Report on the teaching service in West Malaysia (supra, 325, note 66) recommended that 25,329 teachers be dispensed with should they fail to obtain the Cambridge School Certificate or the Malaysian Certificate of Education within a period of three years. These teachers are to be required to obtain these qualifications on their own effort because "it would be a self-defeating economy if Government were to bear the expenses of providing courses to enable these under-qualified teachers" to obtain the required certificates, "especially when qualified persons are available in the open market" (op. cit., 42; emphasis added). Most of the teachers affected are Chinese and Tamil. It is widely believed among the non-Malays that this recommendation intends to replace Chinese and Tamil teachers with Malay teachers, thus creating employment opportunities for the Malay youth. Moreover, as Mr. Sim Mow Yu, the President of the United Chinese School Teachers' Association, pointed out, this recommendation is not only unfair but tantamount to a breach of faith. First, he said, "The teachers of Chinese schools were trained in Chinese and have been teaching in Chinese; but they are now required to pass examinations not written in Chinese. For the majority of them this requirement cannot possibly be fulfilled. We would like to ask if Enche Aziz [head of the Report] would think it possible for him to pass a Chinese high school examination within three years. Second, the teachers now teaching in Chinese schools are qualified teachers, many of them being graduates of training institutions established and administered by the government like the Normal Classes and the DTC. Their qualifications have long been recognized by the government, as the government has issued blue teaching certificates to them recognizing them as permanent teachers. ... There is no doubt that only a few of them would be able to pass the required examinations. The result would be that most of them would be kicked out of service and in their places English-educated or Malay-educated teachers would be employed. This will then entail the change of the teaching medium in Chinese primary schools. National-type Chinese schools will then be transformed into national schools. This is an attempt



Chinese Associations and Guilds in a memorandum to the Prime Minister in 1965, the Chinese

are trembling with fear when [they] review of [sic] the past, see the present, and think of the future. The racial extremists even declared that Chinese is a foreign language and that sign boards in Chinese should be changed. Names of towns, railway stations and Government departments in Chinese have been smeared. ... The Chinese are very much worried over their own culture and their future.<sup>71</sup>

In recent years, Malay pressure for rapid Malayization in the fields of education and language has been growing. Malay students in the University of Malaya have been agitating for the use of Malay as the medium of teaching and administration in that university. As a result of a demonstration in October 1970 organized by the Malay Language Society in which notices in English were torn down and English words on signboards were painted out,<sup>72</sup> all signs and name boards in the campus

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to carry out the provisions of Clauses 129 and 133 of the Talib Report which will eventually lead to the extinction of the Chinese schools." See Sin Chew Jit Poh, March 27, 1969, 10. English translation of Sim's statement is the author's. For other Chinese comments on the Report, see ibid., March 31, 1969, 14; April 2, 1969, 12; and April 7, 1969, 10.

<sup>71</sup>Protem Working Committee of Representatives of Chinese Associations and Guilds of Malaysia, A Memorandum to the Prime Minister for a Rightful Place of the Chinese Language (Kuala Lumpur: Asia Press, 1965), 3.

<sup>72</sup>This action of the Malay students was first condemned by the Students' Union of the University as vandalism but at a hastily called general meeting, the Malay Language Society succeeded in forcing the Union's





"were rapidly changed to Malay (romanised)".<sup>73</sup> The renewal of some non-Malay business licences has been refused on the ground that their business signboards have not been written in Malay.<sup>74</sup>

Non-Malays' cultural rights are supposed to be guaranteed by Article 152(1)(a-b) of the Malaysian constitution, which states that

The national language shall be the Malay language ... provided that -  
 (a) no person shall be prohibited or prevented from using (otherwise than for official purposes), or from teaching or learning, any other language; and (b) nothing in this clause shall prejudice the right of the Federal Government or of any State Government to preserve and sustain the use and study of the language of any other community in the Federation.

In practice, however, the first part of this clause, i.e., the national language shall be the Malay language, has been emphasized to a point

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executive to withdraw the condemnation. The Society demanded that Bahasa Malaysia be the only teaching medium in arts by 1978 and in science by 1988. See James Morgan, "Extremely Moderate", Far Eastern Economic Review, November 7, 1970, 19-20. Lim Kiat Siang, the leader of the Democratic Action Party, described the incident as a victory of the force of authoritarianism and totalitarianism over that of reason. See Sin Chew Jit Poh, October 25, 1970, 9.

<sup>73</sup> See Anthony Harrison, "A Question of Handicaps", Far Eastern Economic Review, November 28, 1970, 11.

<sup>74</sup> Based on this reason, the Town Board of Petaling Jaya recently refused the renewal of a number of business licences and permits. See The Straits Times, April 8, 1970, 8.



where the two important injunctions of the same clause have been either forgotten or violated. Such a development is not surprising, because Malaysia has been conceived by the vast majority of the Malays as a Malay country and the federal government has been pursuing a monocultural policy on the question of language and education. Moreover, the two constitutional injunctions are themselves limited in scope and negative in nature. First, Chinese and Tamil are not official languages and thus they have not been accepted by the constitution as an inherent part of the Malaysian linguistic system. In other words, the status of Chinese and Tamil in Malaysia is nothing more than that of any other foreign languages, French, German and Russian, for example. The important question regarding non-Malay languages in the country is not whether they are allowed to survive but whether they have been politically accepted as parts of the whole Malaysian identity. The fact that they are not official languages has also set limit to their use in the society. Second, as seen earlier, the using and learning of non-Malay languages can be discouraged or prevented through political pressure. The failure of the Chinese Community to establish the Merdeka University was due to official displeasure. The discontinuation of government aid to Chinese secondary schools in the early 1960's was certainly not agreeable to the spirit of Article 152(1)(a-b). Finally, point (b) of Article 152(1) is essentially negative in nature.

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It regards the preservation and sustaining of the use and study of non-Malay languages as a right, rather than an obligation, of the federal government or state authorities. Since it is seen as a right, the government may choose not to exercise it at all. As Tunku Abdul Rahman pointed out in a similar context, "This power is only vested in the Government. Nobody has got the right to demand for it."<sup>75</sup> This important Article is now listed as one of the "sensitive issues". To what extent this change would affect the policy of the new Razak government toward language and education still remains to be seen.

The formation of Malaysia in 1963 did not adversely affect the political and cultural dominance that the Malays had already enjoyed in the political system. Because Singapore had a large Chinese population, several constitutional measures were taken to ensure that the basic power situation among the communities in the peninsula would remain largely the same after the formation of Malaysia. It was against this background that, when Lee Kuan Yew, the Prime Minister of Singapore, attempted to challenge the political and cultural supremacy of the Malays in 1964-65, Singapore was forced to leave the new Federation.<sup>76</sup>

#### The Racial Bargain

Like the Federation of Malaya Agreement of 1948, both the

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<sup>75</sup>The National Language, op. cit., 4. See supra, 322, for the occasion in which the Tunku made the statement. For a similar remark by Abdul Razak, see ibid., 16-17.

<sup>76</sup>The role of Singapore in Malaysia and the separation in 1965 will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter VIII.





1957 and 1963 constitutions draw a distinction between the Malays and the non-Malays and do not grant equal citizenship status to all people of the same circumstances, which is equivalent to a division between the sons of the soil and the aliens. The principle of jus soli is applied to all Malays and the indigenous peoples, whereas, in the case of other non-Malays, automatic citizenship is given only to the second generation of local birth and those born on or after Merdeka Day (or Malaysia Day). The rest of the non-Malays must comply with fairly complicated registration or naturalization requirements, including language and residential qualifications.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, a citizen by registration or naturalization may be deprived of his citizenship if the federal government is satisfied that "he has shown himself by act or speech to be disloyal or disaffected toward the Federation" (Article 25(1)(a)). The massive review of citizenship papers of a quarter of a million non-Malays in late 1969 aroused widespread fear among the non-Malay communities that the Malay-dominated government might use the deprivation power to create employment opportunities for the Malays.<sup>78</sup> Although a person who is

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<sup>77</sup>See Malaysian Constitution, Articles 14-31 and the Second Schedule. See also K. J. Ratnam, op. cit., 93-101; F. G. Carnell, "Malayan Citizenship Legislation", International and Comparative Law Quarterly, 1, 4 (October 1952), 504-518; and Zelman Cowen, "The Emergence of a New Federation", Tasmanian University Law Review, 1, 1 (July 1958), 46-67; and L. A. Sheridan and Harry E. Groves, op. cit...

<sup>78</sup>The measure was taken "to insure that citizens or those legitimately entitled to citizenship have first preference on jobs." The Straits Times, November 6, 1969, 1.



to be deprived of his citizenship may refer his case to a committee of inquiry, a decision of the federal government on the matter of terminating citizenship is not subject to appeal or review in any court (Second Schedule, Part III, (1-2)).

It is true that the non-Malays can look forward to a day when everyone of them will be given automatic citizenship since the principle of jus soli is now applied to second-generation non-Malays of local birth. But it should be pointed out that automatic citizenship for the non-Malays does not confer upon them equal political and cultural rights with their Malay counterparts. This difference was already determined by the initial distinction made between the Malays and the non-Malays for the purpose of granting citizenship. According to this original division which was, to the Malays, a recognition of the difference between the sons of the soil and the aliens, the non-Malays, being "aliens", were not entitled to, but only eligible for, citizenship, and their eligibility and citizenship rights were to be decided by the Malays, the sons of the soil. Although the grant of citizenship to the non-Malays was made easier in 1957, the basic principle of Malay political and cultural supremacy has been sophisticatedly embodied in the 1957 and the 1963 constitutions. It was because of the fact that this principle was recognized that the Malays were willing to make the grant of citizenship to the non-Malays a bit easier. in 1957. Tunku Abdul Rahman wrote in 1969:

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Nobody can deny that originally this was the country of the Malays, who are unquestionably the indigenous people. Therefore any Constitution must make provision specifically for the traditions, customs and rights of the Malays. Our Constitution does this.<sup>79</sup>

In recent years, the leaders of the Malay community have claimed that the Malaysian constitution represents a racial consensus regarding the status of the Malay community. The present Deputy Prime Minister, Dato' Dr. Ismail, pointed out in 1965 that at the time of independence in 1957 Chinese leaders had accepted the national language and Malay privileges in return for Malays' agreement to grant citizenship to the Chinese.<sup>80</sup> In 1969, he referred to this agreement as "the consensus under which Malaya came into being."<sup>81</sup> By the same token, the National Operations Council claimed in its report on the 1969 racial riots that the citizenship provisions "were agreed to by the Malays in return for a reaffirmation of the special position of the Malays and the specific obligation of the Government to safeguard that provision."<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup>May 13: Before and After, op. cit., 144.

<sup>80</sup>The Straits Times, Aug. 6, 1965, 9.

<sup>81</sup>The Straits Times, July 7, 1969, 5. Dato' Dr. Ismail said: "the Malays would give up this special position when a united nation was a reality. ... But it is not for the others to demand this, because it is a breach of the consensus under which Malaya came into being."

<sup>82</sup>The May 13 Tragedy: A Report (Kuala Lumpur: The National Operations Council, 9 October, 1969), 85.



Such a claim is usually referred to by the students of Malaysian politics as the informal "racial bargain"<sup>83</sup> which is officially supposed to provide the formal justification for the continuation of Malay special position and political dominance.

The existence of an informal "racial bargain" in 1957 is open to doubt. As a matter of fact, as seen earlier in this study, the principal elements of this so-called "racial bargain" were formulated, not in 1957, but in 1946-48. They were laid down in the fundamental documents of the country, not as a result of the common efforts of all the communities in Malaya, but as a product of what the Straits Times called "an Anglo-Malay body" which operated in secrecy and did not bear "the stamp of democracy."<sup>84</sup> During the period in which the basic shape of the present Malaysian constitution was formed, the Malay community had gained a political advantage which the non-Malay communities could hardly afford to challenge. As will be seen below shortly, if there were really an informal "bargain" in 1957, it is almost certain that it was not a free one.

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<sup>83</sup>R. S. Milne refers to this "bargain" as the basis "by which the Chinese were, by and large, to retain their economic power and were to attain limited political power through liberal citizenship provisions, but the Malays were to retain political power and to obtain certain economic safeguards." See his "National Ideology and Nation-Building in Malaysia", Asian Survey, 10, 7 (July 1970), 564. See also idem, "Political Modernization in Malaysia", Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies, 6, 1 (March 1969), 4, 14-15.

<sup>84</sup>The Straits Times, editorial, July 25, 1947, 4.



As mentioned earlier in this study, the Malay victory in the anti-Malayan Union agitation was a decisive turning point in the political history of Malaysia. Under the leadership of Dato' Onn bin Ja'afar, who "utilized the existing structure of authority in Malay society, from the Malay Rulers down to the kampong headman in the Malay village, to build a mass party",<sup>85</sup> the Malays found a unity they had never known before. The Anglo-Malay secret negotiations in 1946-47, which led to the establishment in 1948 of "a Federation completely reactionary in spirit and carrying Malaya back not merely to 1939 but to a period prior to 1874",<sup>86</sup> were direct recognition that the Malays were the rightful owners of Malaya whereas the non-Malays, being aliens, were not entitled to a share in the actual decisions affecting the future of the country. In the final draft of the Federation of Malaya Agreement of 1948, not only the non-Malay demands as expressed by the All-Malayan Council of Joint Action (AMCJA) were completely disregarded but the minority report of the Consultative Committee was entirely ignored. In a statement, Mr. H. S. Lee, a Chinese member of the Consul-

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<sup>85</sup>Gordon P. Means, Malaysian Politics (New York: New York University Press, 1970), 392. Means' book provides the most comprehensive descriptions and analysis of the Malaysian polity from the end of the Second World War to the beginning of 1968. It was published recently and has just reached the hands of the author.

<sup>86</sup>Victor Purcell, Malaya: Communist or Free? (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1954), 249. In Tan Cheng Lock's words, the Federation was "designed to retard and not to advance the natural and legitimate aspirations of the people" and was "mainly based on the reactionary principle of the sanctification of the status quo." See his "A Chinese View of Malaya", op. cit., 18.





tative Committee, declared that

The revised proposals are so one-sided as to have a tendency towards making a united Malaya a most difficult task. ... After perusal of the revised proposals, it appears to me that His Majesty's Government has ignored entirely the recommendations of the minority report of the consultative committee, rejected most of the conclusions of the committee itself and accepted nothing of the suggestions of the Chinese organizations and chambers of commerce. The stringent and restrictive conditions imposed on non-Malays are definitely a discrimination resulting from the alleged fears of the Malays, which are totally unfounded, that they will be swamped by immigrants.<sup>87</sup>

In spite of the Malay claim that the Federation Agreement was not opposed by "the majority of the non-Malays",<sup>88</sup> it is undeniable that all the essential provisions in that Agreement were formulated and "executed ... without consultation with the Chinese who formed no small portion of the population."<sup>89</sup>

The political supremacy that the Malays gained from their exhilarating victory in 1946-48 has never since been lost. In actual fact,

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<sup>87</sup>The Straits Times, August 26, 1947, 4. Emphasis added.

<sup>88</sup>The May 13 Tragedy: A Report, op. cit., 84.

<sup>89</sup>T. H. Tan, "The Chinese in Malaya", Eastern World, November 1953, 15. Mr. T. H. Tan wrote in his capacity as the Chief Executive Secretary of the Malayan Chinese Association. He complained that the Chinese in Malaya had been discriminated against by all the major legislations enacted after the Second World War. He reproduced approvingly an article published in the MCA's organ, Malayan Mirror, entitled "Chinese Penalized by Law - What Have They Done to Deserve All This? - Official Actions Do Not Tally with Assurance."



that victory has set the pattern of political input in the country, a pattern which has been characterized by the ascendancy of the Malay community. This Malay preponderance was further strengthened by the Communist revolt which was largely Chinese-led. Moreover, the Emergency also succeeded in driving some leading members of the non-Malay upper and middle classes and the majority of the English-educated elites (most of whom were supporting the New Democratic Union and the AMCJA during the Malayan Union crisis<sup>90</sup>) to support the Malay aristocratic and bureaucratic elites in their drive to gain political power from the British. Despite vigorous opposition from the non-Malay communities, the 1952 Federation of Malaya Agreement Amendment Ordinance was put through. The various reports on education, which were aimed at enforcing a unilingual policy, were rejected by the Chinese community but were implemented without any significant changes.<sup>91</sup> In 1957, the Reid Commission based their constitutional proposals almost entirely on the recommendations presented by the Alliance on the assumption that the three partners of the Alliance - the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) - enjoyed "widespread support" in their respective

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<sup>90</sup>Gordon P. Means, Malaysian Politics, op. cit., 87. Means observes that "the conservative Chinese who were very active politically were perfectly willing to let the MDU speak for them in championing the equality of all communities in Malaya."

<sup>91</sup>See Lim Lian Geok, op. cit., 79-83.





communities and their constitutional recommendations represented "a reasonable and proper compromise" of this intercommunal united front.<sup>92</sup> This assumption did not, however, seem to dovetail with the actual fact.

As will be detailed in the next chapter, the Alliance was not a united front of three equal partners but a political instrument dominated by the Malay component of the partnership. In a confidential letter, Tan Siew Sin, the son of Dato' Sir Tan Cheng Lock and the present President of the MCA, wrote in 1956:

If ... I myself were personally convinced that the Umno amendments [of the constitutional proposals] are fair in themselves I would be prepared to agree to them even if it meant risking the ire of our rank and file. Unfortunately, I do not feel that the amendments proposed by UMNO are fair in themselves. This means that we have to give in to them because they happen to be stronger and I do not think this a a satisfactory principle on which to base our future relationship. In other words, we have to yield to expediency on issues which

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<sup>92</sup>The Reid Commission declared that "We have come to the conclusion that the best proposals for dealing fairly with the present constitution are those put forward by the Alliance. The parties of the Alliance have given full consideration to this matter and apart from a few minor points they have reached agreement. We are satisfied that this agreement is a reasonable and proper compromise between the views of the parties, each of which has the most widespread support from the race which it represents ...". See The Report of the Constitutional Commission 1957, op. cit., 16.



concern not only us but may well  
affect the future of our children  
and our grandchildren.<sup>93</sup>

In another confidential letter to Dr. Lim Chong Eu, Tan Siew Sin said, "In theory, the Alliance is a political party representing the three main racial groups in the country .... In practice, as everyone knows, we cannot even agree on first principles and fundamental issues."<sup>94</sup> He admitted that he was "pessimistic about the future of Sino-Malay relationship", because "apart from a handful of the top leaders", "the whole UMNO" was "narrow-minded, racialistic and fanatical."<sup>95</sup> If Tan Siew Sin's letters reflected the actual situation within the Alliance in 1956 before the constitution was finalized, it can be gathered that the so-called "racial bargain" was, in fact, not a product of "a reasonable and proper compromise" among the views of the three partners, but an expression of the fact of Malay supremacy.

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<sup>93</sup>The letter was dated September 8, 1956, and was addressed to Dr. Lim Chong Eu (who was an important leader of the MCA at that time and later succeeded Tan Cheng Lock as the President of the MCA until 1959). This letter and the one mentioned below in footnote 94 were read by Dr. Lim in a press conference held by Lee Kuan Yew in the Federal Parliament Building on June 3, 1965. It is interesting to note that none of the major newspapers carried a report on the contents of the two letters. For full texts, see "Appendix A" in Lee Kuan Yew, The Battle for a Malaysian Malaysia (2), (Singapore: Ministry of Culture, 1965), 57-61. Photostated copies of the two letters can be found in the Malaysian Mirror, 1, 15 (June 12, 1965), 4-6.

<sup>94</sup>This letter was dated September 27, 1956, and addressed to Dr. Lim Chong Eu. See Lee Kuan Yew, ibid., 59.

<sup>95</sup>Tan Siew Sin's letter to Dr. Lim Chong Eu dated September 27, 1956. See Lee Kuan Yew, ibid., 61.



During the period of constitution-making in 1956-1957, political demands genuinely representative of the non-Malay population were articulated by political groups and associations outside rather than inside the Alliance. The Pan-Malayan Federation of Chinese Associations and Guilds which represented a total of 1,094 organizational units across the country called several general meetings and put forward a memorandum demanding equal citizenship rights for all Chinese and equality for the Chinese and Tamil languages with Malay both in education and in the legislature. It also sent a delegation headed by Lau Pak Khuan to London to present the Chinese case to the Colonial Office. Before his departure, Lau stated that the views of 2,000,000 Malayan Chinese he represented had been ignored in the process of formulating a new constitution for independent Malaya. He declared

The MCA represents only a minority of Chinese in the Federation. Most of its members joined during the time of its lotteries. The Federation of Chinese Guilds and Associations, on the other hand, represents 2,000,000 people who are giving the delegation their full support. ... Our loyalty to Malaya is not in doubt. It is because of our loyalty that we are trying to ensure fair treatment and cordial relations between different communities after independence. But there cannot be harmonious relations when nearly half the population is dissatisfied. We look upon Tunku Abdul Rahman as our leader. He is an able man,

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but he must see that not only  
the Malays but the other races  
also have a fair deal.<sup>96</sup>

Lau's delegation asked for nationality by birth, equal rights for all citizens, a multi-lingual legislature and a five-year residential qualification for citizenship by naturalization. These representations came to nothing. In the final draft of the 1957 constitution, parties other than the Alliance were not consulted.<sup>97</sup>

Since the representativeness of the MCA had been widely questioned by the Chinese, it can hardly be said that the political framework set out in the 1957 constitution, which was accepted without change in the 1963 constitution, has, as one authority in Malaysian politics points out, "done justice to all sections of the population."<sup>98</sup> To all

<sup>96</sup> See The Straits Times, April 20, 1957, 7. For other reports on Lau's mission, see ibid., April 17, 1957, 9; and May 2, 1957, 4. The United Chinese School Teachers' Association also stated that the MCA was not representative of the Chinese community and thus had no right to speak for the Malayan Chinese as a whole. See ibid., August 30, 1956, 7.

<sup>97</sup> See J. Norman Parmer, op. cit., 149. The development in 1956-57, Victor Purcell wrote, "revealed a large section of the Chinese in a far less conciliatory mood than that reflected by the Malayan Chinese Association. Agitation against the citizenship and language provisions of the constitution was also voiced by the Indians, the Eurasians, and the Straits Chinese British Association". See his "After Merdeka: The Constitutional Outlook in Malaya", Parliamentary Affairs, 10, 4 (August 1957), 393.

<sup>98</sup> K. J. Ratnam, op. cit., 62. In making such a judgment, Ratnam failed to take into proper account the numerous statements made by Chinese organizations outside the Alliance. For example, the memorandum on the Reid Report released by the Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce on April 22, 1957 said: "Today there is a general feeling of



intents and purposes, it is little more than a modified version of the 1948 Federation of Malaya Agreement. Although the grant of citizenship to the non-Malays is liberalized under the new provisions, like the 1948 Federation, Malaysia is almost totally cast in and embellished with the supremacy of Malay political culture. If the parents refuse to treat their adopted child on an equal basis within the family, it cannot be said that they have done justice to that child. It would be difficult for these parents to expect that when the child grows up, he would have strong attachment to them and his fellow brothers and sisters. In Malaysia, therefore, what is important is not whether a "racial bargain" had actually been made between the leaders of the Malays and the non-Malays, but the fact that the vast majority of the non-Malay population has seen great injustice and deprivations in this "bargain".

The foregoing observation has made it clear that the long-standing crisis involving the Malay demands for political and cultural supremacy and the non-Malay demands for political equality and cultural pluralism has been resolved, at least constitutionally, in favor

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injustice and frustration among the Chinese inhabitants because they have struggled along-side other racial groups for the independence of the Federation only to find that they are to be treated as inferior subjects of a 'master race' and many legitimate rights and privileges hitherto enjoyed by all citizens are to be denied to Chinese and non-Malays purely on racial ground. The Chinese people, therefore, cannot help but feel that if such a situation is allowed to be created in the Federation Merdeka [Independence] would have no meaning at all." The Straits Times, April 23, 1957, 7.





of Malay supremacy. But how long can such a solution persist since its support base is largely confined to one community - the Malay. Is the idea of a Malay-dominated Malaysia viable in the Malaysian environment? It is undeniable that the present political reality in Malaysia is that both the input and the output functions of the political system have been dominated by the Malay political elites and this preponderance has been sustained by the strong primordial sentiment of the Malay community as a whole. The constitutional framework of a Malay Malaysia can thus be seen as a reflection of this actual Malay predominance. But, as Mr. Lau Pak Khuan pointed out in 1957, "there cannot be harmonious relations when nearly half of the population is dissatisfied."<sup>99</sup> Then, does the task of political integration in Malaysia call for the constant and stern suppression of the articulation of this non-Malay dissatisfaction so as to maintain Malay hegemony until a Malay nation embracing all the communities is created, or for a new approach which will accommodate this dissatisfaction in a genuinely multiracial and multicultural Malaysia? These problems will be considered after the Alliance formula is examined in the next chapter.

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<sup>99</sup>Supra, 344, note 96.



PART III

THE ALLIANCE FORMULA AND MALAYIZATION



## CHAPTER VI

### THE ALLIANCE FORMULA

The functions of political parties are not confined only to interest articulation and aggregation, political recruitment and public decision-making. They can also serve as agents of social and political change. This is particularly the case in the developing countries.

Confronted by needs to mobilize widespread support for political activities, to create new, non-traditional bases of legitimacy, and to provide new sets of values to initiate and sustain economic modernization, the new nation often sees unified political parties as important investments. Parties ... can engage the individual in new patterns of values, and subsequently reinforce these through continued contact and participation.<sup>1</sup>

The importance of political parties in the process of nation-building

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<sup>1</sup>Gabriel A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell, Jr., Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1966), 116.





in the transitional societies, thus, lies in the fact that they can be used as powerful tools for political mobilization and socialization through involving large numbers of people in political action. As agents of change, political parties may perform either one of the two important kinds of political socialization. The first is a reinforcement of the existing political culture and the social status quo, while the second is the initiation of significant change in the patterns of the existing political culture and the basic order of power relationships in society. In Malaysia, all political parties are conditioned by the communal pattern of social groupings and tend to perform the first rather than the second kind of political socialization.

### Political Parties and Communalism

In terms of their communal qualifications for membership, three types of Malaysian political parties can be identified: communal, intercommunal, and non-communal. Political parties like the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC), the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP), Party Bumiputra (PB), Party Pesaka Anak Sarawak (Pesaka), the United Sabah National Organization (USNO) and the United National Kadazan Organization (UNKO),<sup>2</sup> are communal because their membership is,

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<sup>2</sup>Other examples include the Sarawak Chinese Association, Sabah Chinese



in one way or another, restricted to the members of their respective communal groups. The example of an intercommunal party is the Alliance which is a coalition of the leaders of the three communally-based parties: the UMNO, the MCA, and the MIC. Finally, political parties whose membership door is open to all communities are non-communal. Included in this category are the Democratic Action Party (DAP), the Gerakan Ra'ayat Malaysia (GRM), the People's Progressive Party (PPP), the Party Ra'ayat (PR), the Labor Party of Malaya (LPM), the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP), and the Machinda.

The communal characteristics of a political party in Malaysia are not, however, determined by its membership qualifications alone. The composition of party executive leadership and public issue

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Association, and the two component units (Party Negara Sarawak and Barisan Ra'ayat Jati Sarawak) of the present Party Bumiputra. Party Bumiputra (Malay-dominated) and Party Pesaka (Iban-dominated) are open only to the natives. The USNO and the UNKO are dominated by Malays and Kadazans respectively. Throughout Malaysia, slightly over half of the political parties open their membership doors to all communities. The Malays and the natives in the Borneo states are more welcomed into party membership than the Chinese and Indians. About 80 percent of the parties are open to the Malays and the natives while only about 60 percent of them are open to the Chinese and Indians. For a study on classification of parties by communal qualifications for membership in Malaysia, see John A MacDougall, Shared Burdens: A Study of Communal Discrimination by the Political Parties of Malaysia and Singapore (Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1968), 156ff. For other studies on Malaysian party politics, see Gerald S. Maryanov, "Political Parties in Mainland Malaya", Journal of Southeast Asian History, 8, 1 (March 1967), 99-110; Craig A. Lockhard, "Parties, Personalities and Crisis Politics in Sarawak", Journal of Southeast Asian History, 8, 1 (March 1967), 111-121; R. S. Milne, "Political Parties in Sarawak and Sabah", Journal of Southeast Asian History, 6, 2 (September 1965), 104-17; and Gordon P. Means, Malaysian Politics (New York: New York University Press, 1970), 193-264, 333-390.





preferences are two other important factors influencing the communal or non-communal image of a political party. Predominantly Chinese-led parties such as the DAP, the LPM, the GRM (especially its Penang section), and the SUPP remain predominantly Chinese-supported parties, whereas Malay leadership in Party Ra'ayat and Party Bumiputra (restricted to the Malays and other natives in Sarawak) attracts mainly Malay followers. Such a phenomenon is not difficult to explain because it is an indication of the low level of horizontal integration among members of the different communities. Like other associational interest groups', parties' membership is conditioned by communal outlook and tends to be confined along communal lines.

Party policies on public issues may make a difference as regards the communal or non-communal orientations of a political party but the relationship of public issue preferences to party outlook cannot be fully understood without reference to the nature of the vertical attachment of the different communities to the Malaysian polity and the fact of Malay political and cultural supremacy. As mentioned elsewhere in this study,<sup>3</sup> the different communities in Malaysia have now become attached to the country as their permanent home; but the nature and degree of this attachment vary from one community to another depending on their own conception of their status in the society. Generally speaking, the Malays tend to see Malaysia as their tanah ayer

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<sup>3</sup>Supra, 43-44, 284-287.



(fatherland) and to regard themselves as the sons of the soil who should enjoy a special position not open to the non-Malays. On the other hand, the non-Malays tend to see Malaysia as their adopted homeland and look upon themselves as the citizens of the country who should be given equal political and cultural rights with the Malays. It was in response to the conflict of these two different conceptions of vertical identification that political parties sprang up in Malaya in the post-war years. The Malay Nationalist Party, for example, was formed before the return of the British in 1945 to continue the KMM's "struggle" for a Melayu Raya, whereas the UMNO was organized during the Malayan Union crisis to defend the "birthrights" of the Malays.<sup>4</sup> By the same token, non-Malay-led political parties, such as the New Democratic Union, the PPP, the United Democratic Party (UDP) and the DAP, were established to fight for political and cultural equality for all communities in the country. As pointed out by Gordon P. Means, in Malaysia, "each segment of society became politically active largely as a negative response to some policies or events that affected it adversely, or threatened to do so."<sup>5</sup> Consequently, Malay-led political parties tend to pursue a policy of Malay supremacy while their non-Malay-led counterparts are likely to adhere to a program calling for equal

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<sup>4</sup>Supra, 214, 246ff.

<sup>5</sup>Gordon P. Means, op. cit., 392.



treatment for all citizens. The public policy preferences of both the Malay and the non-Malay elites are shaped by the different orientations of their respective communities and are intended to promote the interests of their own fellow-racials.

Under normal circumstances, one should assume that political parties like the UMNO, the MCA, the MIC and the PMIP, which are communally restricted in their membership and leadership, and profess to champion the rights and interests of the communities they represent respectively, are communal, whereas those parties which are open to all communities and stand for ultimate communal equality are non-communal. In Malaysia, however, since the dominant political culture is Malay and the model of nation-building is based on assimilation to Malay culture, communalism has been defined in such a way as to assume that any challenge to the dominant political culture, i.e., Malay supremacy, is communal. The PPP, the DAP and even the GRM have been considered by most of the Malays as being communal parties mainly on the ground that their platforms are designed to bring about communal equality for all. K. J. Ratnam was adopting this interpretation when he wrote that "Non-Malays who advocate complete Malay/non-Malay equality at the present moment are here [in his book] regarded as being 'communal'."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ratnam explained that "The reason for this somewhat unusual definition lies in the contention (reflected in official policy) that the Malays should, as a matter of right, be given certain priorities. Thus at present, non-communal politics would imply the advocacy of equal rights and privileges for everyone, with 'equality' defined in such a manner as to assume a few (defined) priorities in favor of the Malay community." See his Communalism and the Political Process in Malaya (Kuala Lumpur:





This is indeed an "unusual definition". To accept Ratnam's interpretation, one has to assume that Malay supremacy, or the goal of building a Malay Malaysia, has already been legitimized in a genuinely broad-based consensus among the various communities. In reality, however, as seen in the last chapter, the so-called "original consensus" or "racial bargain" did not enjoy wide support among the non-Malay communities. It is now being repudiated by an increasing number of the non-Malays who have now become committed to Lee Kuan Yew's idea of a Malaysian Malaysia "as the summation of their non-communal conceptions of national integration."<sup>7</sup> Therefore, regardless of how one would define communal politics, political parties in Malaysia can be differentiated according to their attitude toward the integrative crisis of the country.

The Malaysian-Malaysia group, which includes those parties formerly associated with the Malaysian Solidarity Convention (i.e., the People's Action Party [now the DAP], the PPP, the UDP [now a com-

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University of Malaya Press, 1965), 159, note 40; and *idem*, "Political Parties and Pressure Groups" in Wang Gungwu (ed.), Malaysia: A Survey (New York: Praeger, 1964), 340. Ratnam's view is based on official attitude toward "communal politics"; and therefore it fails to differentiate between "priorities" based on economic needs and "priorities" based on racial origin. As a matter of fact, very few political parties in Malaysia have advocated "complete Malay/non-Malay equality" as their immediate goal. Almost all political parties have emphasized the need to provide special protections for the weaker communities and accept Malay as the national language.

<sup>7</sup>Cynthia H. Enloe, Multi-Ethnic Politics: The Case of Malaysia (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1967), 276.



ponent part of the GRM], the SUPP and the Machinda), stands for a Malaysia in which "the nation and the state is [sic] not identified with the supremacy, well-being and the interests of any one particular community or race." This group also calls for a new approach "to meet quickly and effectively the economic, social and cultural aspirations of the underprivileged majority of all races without destroying economic stability."<sup>8</sup> To bring about a Malaysian Malaysia which is "the antithesis of a Malay Malaysia, a Chinese Malaysia, a Dyak Malaysia, an Indian Malaysia, or Kadazan Malaysia", these political parties maintain, the "ideas and political styles" of each of the communities must be adjusted "to fit with the new needs of a Malaysian nation."<sup>9</sup> They also support Malay as the national language but insist that the cultural heritages of all communities be respected. The Malaysian Solidarity Convention ceased to be active a few months after Singapore's separation in August 1965 but the campaign for a Malaysian Malaysia has been taken over by the DAP, a successor to the PAP's branches in Malaysia.

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<sup>8</sup> Malaysian Solidarity Convention, Declaration by the Convenors of the Malaysian Solidarity Convention (Singapore: Koon Wah Lithographers, May 9, 1965), 24, 27. The Convention was a product of Lee Kuan Yew's campaign for a Malaysian Malaysia in 1964-65. It ceased to exist since the end of 1965.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 24, 17. See also Democratic Action Party, Who Lives if Malaysia Dies?: The DAP's Case for a Multi-Racial Society (Petaling Jaya: DAP Headquarters, 1969), 95-129, 17-52, 218-222, 230-235. The concept of a Malaysian Malaysia will be examined in detail in the concluding Part of this study.





On the other hand, there are two groups of political parties which aim at achieving the goal of a Malay Malaysia. Unlike the Malaysian-Malaysia group which would like to introduce significant change in the existing patterns of communal orientations, these Malay-Malaysia groups seek to reinforce Malay political culture and to elevate it as the national culture of Malaysia, while requiring the non-Malays to do all the changing in order to fit themselves into the cultural model of the Malay community. Although these two groups share a common goal, they differ in the way and speed in which it should be brought into being. The moderate wing of the UMNO's Western-educated elites (including the former Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman) favors gradualism, i.e., accommodation in the short run and assimilation in the long run. The so-called "ultras" of the UMNO and the PMIP stand for a one-race government and rapid Malayization.<sup>10</sup> As will be seen in the latter part of this chapter, the trends seem to indicate that the forces of the "ultras" in the UMNO have grown in importance since the May riots in 1969. Tunku Abdul Rahman's resignation as the Prime Minister in September 1970 could be interpreted as an indication of the setback of the moderate group within the UMNO, although the Tunku had announced his intention to resign well before the 1969 elections.

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<sup>10</sup>In early October 1967, the PMIP appealed to Malay intellectuals in the UMNO to leave the party and help it set up a Malay government in Malaysia. See The Straits Times, October 14, 1967. According to Tunku Abdul Rahman himself, the "ultras" of the UMNO and the PMIP want to govern the country for the Malays alone. See his May 13: Before and After (Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Melayu Press, 1969), 140, 141, 203.



Finally, the LPM and the PR are based more on ideological than communal inspirations. As pointed out by the Chairman of the PR, communalism is nothing but a manifestation of class exploitation and antagonism. Therefore, he said, "exploitation must be eradicated before the antagonism can be removed and genuine national unity achieved."<sup>11</sup> In 1957, the LPM and the PR formed the Socialist Front (SF) and adopted a platform emphasizing economic rather than communal interests. In 1966, the two partners split over the issue of national integration and the questions of language and Malay special privileges, which had long been the major sources of disagreement and conflict among the SF leaders. Announcing the withdrawal of the LPM from the SF in January 1966, Mr. Lim Kean Siew explained that the main reason of the dissolution was "the heightening of racialism, communal suspicion and hatred since the formation of Malaysia. He declared that the LPM would fight for multilingualism and stated that "we will stress that English is an important language and Chinese and Tamil should not

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<sup>11</sup> See Kassim Ahmad (Chairman of the Party Ra'ayat), "Communalism: A Legacy of Colonialism", Intisari, 3, 2 (1968), 17. The SF manifesto for 1959 elections emphasized "The Three Stages to a Socialist Malaya". First, it proposed to organize and recruit "national capitalists" to "work under a planned system and to take over from foreign interests wherever and whenever possible". Second, "these national capitalists must be absorbed into a planned socialist economy under the direction of a Socialist Government and national enterprises must be set up." Third, it was proposed to gain direct control of national enterprises combined with legislation providing for rent control and security of land tenure. See The Straits Times, August 10, 1959, 7; and August 11, 1959, 2. See also Pan-Malayan Labor Party, Towards A New Malaya (Butterworth: Phoenix Press, 1952).





be suppressed as an excuse to make Malay the sole national language."<sup>12</sup> Rejecting the accusation that the breakup was due to "Malay political chauvinism", one PR party official announced that "the incident which led Party Ra'ayat to break away from Socialist Front is because there is clear evidence that the Chinese in the leadership of the Socialist Front are very strong in their Chinese chauvinism."<sup>13</sup> The fact that the Chinese-educated elites had gained a greater control over the leadership of the LPM might be partly responsible for the breakup; but it is undeniable that like other parties, the socialist camp in Malaysia is also split into a Malay-Malaysia group and a Malaysian-Malaysia group. According to the Utusan Melayu, socialism in Malaysia cannot be "genuine" if it does not reject multilingualism.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See Utusan Melayu, January 11, 1966; and Berita Harian, editorial, January 17, 1966.

<sup>13</sup> Remark of the Publicity Head of the PR Simpang Empat Genting Balek Pulau Branch, Mansor Sutan. See Utusan Melayu, December 31, 1965. Enche Mansor also charged that the Chinese leaders in the SF "are fighting for Chinese chauvinism, anti-national language and anti-basic national interest."

<sup>14</sup> Commenting on the LPM and PR split, the editorial of the Utusan Melayu (January 13, 1966) wrote: "We agree with Enche Musa Hitnam's statement that the breakup of the Socialist Front was caused by the failure of the parties in the Socialist camp to make Socialism a uniting force because of strong Chinese chauvinism .... In fact, all this while we have suspected the genuineness or otherwise of the Socialism practised by the Labour Party. Our suspicion became strong when we studied the Labor Party's attitude toward the National Language: Mr. Lim himself has admitted that the Labor Party





It can thus be seen that communalism colors the entire scene of party politics in Malaysia. The Malaysian-Malaysia group, which aims at establishing a non-communal Malaysia and accepts multi-racialism and multiculturalism as the cultural base of the emerging Malaysian nation, fails to attract any significant Malay following because the Malay masses as a whole have never been resocialized to support a genuinely multiracial and multicultural Malaysia. On the contrary, the idea of a Malaysian Malaysia has been seen by many Malays as a serious threat to their culture and political status, and those who advocate such an idea are likely to be branded by them as "Chinese chauvinists" or "Communists" or "subversive elements". As a result, the Malays have increased their efforts to seek safety in the company of their own fellow-racials and intensified their pressure for rapid Malayization as a counter-response to the non-Malay demand for a Malaysian Malaysia.

On the other hand, communal parties like the PMIP seek to establish an Islamic state and a one-race government and believe in the ultimate union between Malaysia and Indonesia. To the Chinese, these parties are pai-hua parties which want not only to keep the

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prefers multilingualism and that every child should be taught in two languages. The Party Ra'ayat's struggle for the National Language could not be regarded by the Labor Party as Malay communalism if the Labor Party sincerely practised genuine socialism." For the statement issued by Musa Hitam, the UMNO Executive Secretary, see The Straits Times, January 12, 1966.



non-Malays permanently in an inferior position but also to reduce them to mere aliens who could be expelled by the owners of the country at will. Consequently, these parties have found very few supporters among the non-Malay communities.

The activities of these two types of political parties have produced far-reaching socialization effects on the outlooks of the communities. On the one hand, ever since the immediate post-war years, the non-Malays have been mobilized by non-Malay political parties to look upon the country as their own and to demand equal political and cultural rights with the Malays. On the other hand, nearly all Malay-led political parties have taken it upon themselves to defend the Malay character of the country and the "birthrights" of the sons of the soil. As a result, the Malay masses have been drawn into political action to see that the country remains Malay and their special position is guaranteed. Under these circumstances, except through forceful assimilation, a common vertical identification can hardly develop among the members of the different communities. Nor can close horizontal ties develop among them because they tend to see one another as political adversaries rather than co-nation-builders. Consequently, political forces in Malaysia tend to polarize into two camps: the Malays versus the non-Malays.

The UMNO was a communal party originally organized to defend the Malay character of the country and the special privileges and rights

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of the Malays. Later, it found it convenient to work with the MCA and the MIC to achieve its goals. Up to the outbreak of the racial riots in 1969, the Alliance had dominated the entire scene of Malaysian politics and its formula had been claimed as the most appropriate tool for nation-building in Malaysia. The rest of this chapter is devoted to an examination of this claim.

### The Alliance Formula

The Alliance originated in "an ad hoc entente"<sup>15</sup> between the UMNO and the MCA for the purpose of contesting the Kuala Lumpur municipal elections of 1952. Encouraged by its success, the Alliance was

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<sup>15</sup>Robert O. Tilman, "The Alliance Pattern in Malaysian Politics: Bornean Variations on a Theme", South Atlantic Quarterly, 63, 1 (Winter 1964), 60. For the origin of the Alliance and Alliance politics, see K. J. Ratnam, op. cit., 159-165; R. S. Milne, Government and Politics in Malaysia (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1967), 36-37, 215-217, 236-242, and passim; John A. MacDougall, op. cit., 53-73, 288-295; Daniel E. Moore, The United Malays National Organization and the 1959 General Elections: A Study of a Political Party in Action in a Newly Independent Plural Society (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1960); Gordon P. Means, Malaysian Politics, op. cit., 193ff; idem, Malayan Government and Politics in Transition (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Washington, 1960); A. J. Sampson, Forging Democracy in Malaya (Ph.D. Dissertation, George Washington University, 1962), 113-165; Margaret F. Clark, The Malayan Alliance and Its Accommodation of Communal Pressure 1952-1962 (M.A. Thesis, University of Malaya, 1964); Margaret Roff, "The Malayan Chinese Association, 1948-65", Journal of Southeast Asian History, 6, 2 (September 1965), 40-53; idem, "UMNO - The First Twenty Years", Australian Outlook, 20, 2 (August 1966), 168-176; and Roy H. Haas, The Malayan Chinese Association, 1958-1959: An Analysis of Differing Conceptions of the Malayan-Chinese Role in Independent Malaya (M.A. Thesis, Northern Illinois University, 1967), 41ff.



enlarged to include the MIC in 1954. It won the first general elections in 1955<sup>16</sup> and Merdeka (Independence) from Britain in 1957. It has since been the ruling party in Malaysia, although the significance of the MCA and the MIC in the Alliance has greatly reduced since the 1969 elections and the racial riots in Kuala Lumpur.

The Alliance formula or bargaining model evolves from the institutionalization of the intercommunal coalition. Three ingredients of the formula can be identified. First, the Alliance is a bridge among the elites of the three communal partners. Although it is now open for direct membership, it is essentially a form of elite cooperation at the top. Jean Grossholtz writes,

there is no 'Alliance' except at the top. The separate parties go their own way, perpetuate their own jealousies, indiscretions, communal demands ... without regard to their so-called partners. There is little contact at the lower branch level. ... UMNO Youth ... has little if any contact with MCA Youth at the local level.<sup>17</sup>

While the three communally-based parties perform the function of interest articulation separately, the Alliance is concerned mainly with interest aggregation. Second, interest aggregation at the Alliance

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<sup>16</sup>The Alliance won 51 out of a total of 52 popularly elected seats in the Federal Legislative Council. See Irene Tinker, "Malayan Elections: Electoral Pattern for Plural Societies?", Western Political Quarterly, 9, 2 (June 1956), 258-282.

<sup>17</sup>Jean Grossholtz, "The Rise and Demise of Konfrontasi: Impact on Politics in Malaysia", Asian Studies, 6, 3 (December 1968), 338.





level always takes place behind the scene. As pointed out by Tan Siew Sin, the President of the MCA, "we have always maintained that controversial issues are best resolved around a table in a committee room."<sup>18</sup> This is why the Alliance formula is also known as the bargaining model.

Third, after a major policy is adopted in the committee room, several tactics are used to induce public acceptance. Usually, the leaders of the three partners would go back to their own party to convince their members that it would be in their interest to accept the policy formulated by the Alliance. Failing this, some important leaders such as Tunku Abdul Rahman, Tan Siew Sin and other Ministers would tour the country and give assurance to communal representatives that their interests would not be adversely prejudiced in the implementation of the policy already adopted.<sup>19</sup> Public discussions of communal issues and fears are not encouraged because "the surest way

<sup>18</sup>Tan Siew Sin's speech on the National Language Bill on March 3, 1967, in the Dewan Ra'ayat. See The National Language (Kuala Lumpur: Federal Department of Information, 1967), 32. For a similar statement by Tan, see his Towards Stability and Progress, Speech at the 16th Annual Meeting of the Central General Assembly of the MCA on February 26, 1966 (Kuala Lumpur: MCA Headquarters, 1966), 5-6.

<sup>19</sup>Such an approach has been used frequently in the field of education. It was, however, repudiated by Lim Lian Geok, the President of the United Chinese School Teachers' Association (1952-1961), as being an irresponsible act. He said: "The President of our Association has not changed but the highest official in charge of the Ministry of Education has changed six times. From our experience of negotiating with the Ministry, what had been promised by a former Minister was denied by the new one on the ground that he was not responsible for anything that was not written in law." See Lim Lian Geok, hui-yi p'en-p'en lu (Kuala Lumpur: United Chinese School Teachers' Association, 1963), 81.





of not resolving a controversial issue is by shouting about it from the roof tops or through the medium of the public press."<sup>20</sup> Party members are usually told that if they kept silent on major policy issues and were united behind their leaders, everything would turn out to be satisfactory to all concerned. They are also told that if they were not united in their support of the party, they would lose their bargaining power, the Alliance might collapse and their survival might be menaced.<sup>21</sup> In short, once a decision is made, it is regarded by the Alliance leaders as non-political or "beyond politics", and the public is simply asked to accept and obey.

Mohamed Khir Johari, the present Minister of Commerce and Industry, once described the Alliance as "a concrete block built from three angles - from the Malays, Chinese and Indians." He added

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<sup>20</sup>Tan Siew Sin's speech. See The National Language, op. cit., 32.

<sup>21</sup>More will be said about these tactics in this chapter. Here, two quotations suffice to illustrate the point. The Secretary-General of the UMNO, Mohamed Khir Johari, wrote in the Merdeka (the official organ of the UMNO) in July 1966: "UMNO is Malay and Malay is UMNO. ... UMNO's survival means the survival of the Malay race. If UMNO perished, the Malay race would also perish." See Utusan Melayu, July 14, 1966. The Publicity Director of the MCA, Siow Long Hin, stated in 1967: the Chinese "must understand the politics of survival. The survival - politically and economically - of the Chinese in this country depends on the survival of the MCA and the Alliance. This is a fact which cannot be ignored nor denied. The Chinese must be more united in the true sense of the word especially when others are coming closer together in some spheres. A divided Chinese community in this country will only open itself to exploitation by others and this will eventually affect the MCA especially in its efforts to represent the interests of the Chinese in this country." For full text, see The Eastern Sun, August 17, 1967, 8.



the Chinese in the MCA are holding the reins of business, the Indians in the MIC are keen in labour matters, while the Malays are giving political peace. The Chinese can be regarded as sand, the Indians as water and the Malays as cement. When the three are mixed together, a strong block can be built.<sup>22</sup>

However, the foundation of the Alliance is not as solid as Mohamed Khir Johari believed it to be. As a matter of fact, it is more a marriage of convenience than "a concrete block" built from water, sand and cement.

First of all, the Alliance is an elite coalition of three compartmentalized communal parties, each of which is supposed to cater to the interests of the community it professes to represent. As the former Secretary-General of the MCA pointed out in 1963, "the strength of communalism is the very basis of our [Alliance's] existence."<sup>23</sup> Apparently, the basis on which the Alliance has been built is contradictory to the premises of the Alliance formula. On the one hand, the declared aim of the Alliance is to eradicate communalism in the long

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<sup>22</sup> See Utusan Melayu, October 15, 1965. A similar remark was also made by the former Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman. He wrote: "While UMNO looks after politics as its main platform, the MCA continues to help build up business confidence in the country, and the MIC's influence among the industrial and manual group of works has helped to bring about industrial peace in the country. All three working hand in hand have not only brought peace and prosperity to the country but have helped to provide vast funds for rural development." See his May 13: Before and After, op. cit., 142.

<sup>23</sup> Margaret F. Clark, op. cit., 3.





run.<sup>24</sup> On the other, as communal parties, the three partners must appeal to communal interests and sense of solidarity in order to ensure popular support. As a result of this contradiction, Alliance's politics tends to reinforce communal sentiments and particularism and guarantee continuing frictions, which, in turn, tend to defeat not only the purpose of the Alliance formula but the goal of nation-building. As the formula itself rules out open bargaining, negotiations and other processes of public resolution of communal fears and distrust, common interests and orientations which might cut across communal barriers are not encouraged. Thus, the "creation of national unity in Malaysia is inhibited by a political system based on communal identification. This constitutes a trap surrounding every issue with the suspicion of racial exploitation."<sup>25</sup>

As the three partners are communally-based parties, public support of the Alliance seems to depend largely upon whether or not

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<sup>24</sup>See Dato' Dr. Ismail bin Dato' Abdul Rahman, Alliance Malaysian Malaysia in Two Stages (Kuala Lumpur: Federal Department of Information, 1965); and idem, Inter-Racial Harmony (Kuala Lumpur: Federal Department of Information, 1965). Tunku Abdul Rahman said in 1955: "The Alliance will later shed its communal character and a party for all communities will replace the present alliance of communities. We are working towards that end and we have made a real and honest start." The Straits Times, January 31, 1955. For an opposite statement by Enche Ghaffar Baba, the former chief minister of Malacca and vice-president of the UMNO, who indicated in 1965 that integration of the three partners would never take place, see Lee Kuan Yew, The Battle for a Malaysian Malaysia (Singapore: Ministry of Culture, 1965), 45-46.

<sup>25</sup>Jean Grossholtz, op. cit., 338.



the aggregation of conflicting interests that takes place in the Alliance committee room is a genuine compromise of communal interests, involving mutual concessions and sacrifices by all partners in the general interests of the whole. In reality, however, the MCA and the MIC are always called upon to accommodate themselves to a far greater extent than the UMNO. As observed by one writer, the "Malays demand and are conceded paramount political position and special government favor. The MCA is willing to accede to this arrangement just so long as economic and cultural discrimination against the Chinese does not become flagrant. The MIC is unable to assert itself if it would."<sup>26</sup> Alliance's compromise is thus seen by an increasing number of the non-Malays as a cloak for one community to dominate the others.

Three factors seem to account for the failure of the Alliance to maintain its image as a party of equal bargaining partners, an image which is essential for the success of the Alliance formula. First of

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<sup>26</sup> William A. Hanna, Sequel to Colonialism: the 1957-1960 Foundations for Malaysia (New York: American Universities Field Staff, Inc., 1965), 26, and also 47-57. Hanna describes the MCA as "a divided and semi-reconciled junior member" of the Alliance, and the MIC as "not a silent but a politically impotent partner" (*ibid.*, 26). See also K. J. Ratnam, Communalism and the Political Process in Malaya, *op. cit.*, 152-155, 159-165. The position of the MIC in the Alliance is well stated by one writer in the following remark: "The MIC was neither wooed nor repulsed by the Alliance; it is now tolerated on sufferance as a junior partner only to enhance the moral prestige of the Alliance as the most representative political party." See Usha Mahajani, The Role of Indian Minorities in Burma and Malaya (Bombay: Vora and Co., 1960), 287. See also Sinnappah Arasaratnam, Indians in Malaysia and Singapore (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 170ff. Nowadays, many Indians in Malaysia jokingly call the MIC "May I Come (into the Alliance)?"





all, the UMNO is, as seen in previous chapters, an alliance of the traditional elites and the English-educated bureaucrats of the Malay society. As the vast majority of the Malay ra'ayat still looks to the elites for political leadership, the Alliance also enjoys strong support in the rural section of the Malay community. Moreover, the UMNO has also been able to embrace within its fold almost all the traditional as well as modern articulation structures in the Malay society.<sup>27</sup> In contrast, the support base of the MCA and the MIC is confined largely to the business and professional circles of their respective communities.<sup>28</sup> In other words, they do not represent the Chinese and the Indians to the same extent as the UMNO represents the Malays. To the MCA, the Alliance is a valuable channel of access to the ruling elites for Chinese business interests and a tool for mode-

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<sup>27</sup>Cynthia H. Enloe, op. cit., 293.

<sup>28</sup>The nature of MCA's membership can be seen from a speech by its Vice-President, Khaw Kai Boh, at the opening of the Bintang Ward Branch in Penang on March 15, 1968. He said: "If we would only have a cursory look at the membership list so far of this ward branch, we can find among them no less than 20 professional men (consisting of three doctors of medicine, three accountants, two engineers, seven teachers, one lawyer, one management consultant, one journalist and two technicians), 23 office executives (consisting of eight executives, eight executive assistants, three managers, two supervisors and two bank officers), 16 businessmen, and 39 others including seven ladies, many of whom I had the pleasure of talking to, discussing with, and being associated with for some time past." See Why You Should Join the MCA (Kuala Lumpur: MCA Headquarters, 1968), 2. Khaw's statement was designed to show that the MCA had enjoyed the support of the elite segment of the Bintang Ward, but it also revealed the weakness of MCA's support bases.





rating UMNO's policies on economic and cultural affairs. The MCA leadership has, to put it in another way, found the Alliance "of great advantage to share whatever power is possible rather than compete for greater power."<sup>29</sup> The MIC, which "does not have a wide following within the Indian community"<sup>30</sup> and has little influence over the Indian-dominated trade union movement, is in no position to bargain. As a matter of fact, the importance of the MIC in Malaysian politics derives almost entirely from its association with the Alliance rather than from its independent strength.

It would be no exaggeration to suggest that at its inception, the Alliance of the UMNO and the MCA was little more than a marriage of convenience between Malay votes and Chinese wealth. Before the 1955 elections, Sir Tan Cheng Lock, the President of the MCA, openly declared that "the MCA will have to play second fiddle to its ally, the UMNO", because "90 percent of the 1,250,000 registered voters for Federal elections are Malays."<sup>31</sup> Although the number of the non-Malay voters has increased from 15.8 percent in 1955 to 44 percent of the

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<sup>29</sup>See R. K. Vasil, "The 1964 General Elections in Malaya", International Studies, 7, 1 (July 1965), 25.

<sup>30</sup>K. J. Ratnam, Communalism and the Political Process in Malaya, op. cit, 155.

<sup>31</sup>See The Straits Times, February 17, 1955, 2.



total electorate in 1969,<sup>32</sup> electoral support for the MCA and the MIC does not seem to have improved correspondingly.

According to Ratnam and Milne's estimate, the outcome of the 1964 elections shows that Malay voters "split more than two to one in favor of the Alliance, while non-Malays slightly favored the opposition"<sup>33</sup> (about 52 percent of the total non-Malay votes were estimated to have cast for parties other than the Alliance). Most importantly, MCA's candidates in the 1959 and the 1964 elections were successful only in those constituencies which had a sizable Malay vote. In constituencies where the electorate was predominantly Chinese, MCA's

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<sup>32</sup>The communal composition of the electorate in Malaya for the various elections is as follows: 1955: Malays, 84.2%; Chinese, 11.2%; and Indians and Others, 4.6%. 1959: Malays, 56.2%; Chinese, 35.9%; and Indians and Others, 7.8%. 1964: Malays, 54.1%; Chinese, 38%; and Indians and Others, 7.9%. 1969: Malays, 56%; Chinese, 36%; and Indians and Others, 8%. For studies and analysis of these elections, see Irene Tinker, op. cit., 258-282; R. K. Vasil, op. cit., 20-65; T. E. Smith, "The Malayan Elections of 1959", Pacific Affairs, 33, 1 (March 1960), 38-47; T. G. McGee, "The Malayan Elections of 1959: A Study in Electoral Geography", Journal of Tropical Geography, 16 (October 1962), 70-98; idem, "The Malayan Parliamentary Election, 1964", Pacific Viewpoint, 6, 1 (May 1965), 96-101; idem, "Down - But Not Out", Far Eastern Economic Review, 64, 23 (June 5, 1969), 566-568; Robert O. Tilman, "Elections in Sarawak", Asian Survey, 3, 10 (October 1963), 507-518; Daniel E. Moore, op. cit.; Martin Rudner, "The Malaysian General Election of 1969: A Political Analysis", Modern Asian Studies, 4, 1 (January 1970), 1-21; Stuart Drummond and David Hawkins, "The Malaysian Elections of 1969: An Analysis of the Campaign and the Results", Asian Survey, 10, 4 (April 1970), 320-335; K.J. Ratnam and R. S. Milne, The Malayan Parliamentary Elections of 1964 (Singapore: University of Malaya Press, 1967); and idem, "The 1969 Parliamentary Election in West Malaysia", Pacific Affairs, 43, 2 (Summer 1970), 203-226.

<sup>33</sup>K. J. Ratnam and R. S. Milne, The Malayan Parliamentary Elections of 1964, op. cit., 376.





candidates in 1959 and 1964 had been defeated by the opposition parties.<sup>34</sup>

It can be inferred from the 1969 voting results that support for the Alliance is also largely rural- and Malay-based. To the Alliance share of 48.4 percent of the total votes cast, MCA and MIC's candidates contributed only 13.5 percent and 1.3 percent respectively.<sup>35</sup> According to Ratnam and Milne, 6 of the 104 constituencies in West Malaysia can be classified as "urban", and 25, as "quasi-urban".<sup>36</sup> In the 1969 elections, all 6 "urban" seats went to the

<sup>34</sup>See T. G. McGee, "The Malayan Elections of 1959 ...", op. cit., 80-99; idem, "The Malayan Parliamentary Election, 1964", op. cit., 96-101. In the 1959 elections, 19 MCA candidates won their seats, and 4 were defeated, in those constituencies where the Malay voters constituted 20 percent or more of the electorate, while 8 candidates in constituencies in which the Malay voters formed less than 20 percent were defeated. In 1964, MCA won 25 seats in the first type of constituencies and 2 in the second type, while it failed to win 1 in the first and 5 in the second.

<sup>35</sup>All figures concerning the 1969 elections in this chapter were computed from the election results published in The Straits Times, May 12, 1969, 6; and Nanyang Siang Pau, May 12, 1969, 8. The coverage of Nanyang Siang Pau was more complete and detailed than the Straits Times. Percentage of total vote by party for the 1969 elections was as follows: Alliance, 48.4; PMIP, 23.8; DAP, 13.7; GRM, 8.6; PPP, 3.9; PR, 1.2; and Others, 0.4. All figures in this chapter had been computed before the various studies of the 1969 elections (cited in 370, note 32) were published in the various journals.

<sup>36</sup>K. J. Ratnam and R. S. Milne, The Malayan Parliamentary Election of 1964, op. cit., 364, note 8. The 6 urban constituencies are: Bukit Bintang, Bandar Malacca, Ipoh, Menglembu, Dato' Kramat, and Tanjong. The 25 quasi-urban constituencies are: "Batu, Bungsar, Damansara, Setapak, Rawang, Klang, Johore Bahru Timor, Johore Bahru Barat, Malacca Tengah, Larut Selatan, Batu Pahat, Muar Pantai, Telok Anson,



opposition parties (GRM 3, PPP 2, and DAP 1). Among the 25 "quasi-urban" constituencies, the Alliance captured 14 (UMNO 7, MCA 6, and MIC 1), half of which were in the party's strongholds of Johore (6) and Pahang (1).<sup>37</sup> In the rural constituencies, 44 seats went to the UMNO, 7 to the MCA and 1 to the MIC.<sup>38</sup>

Bearing in mind the pattern of communal residence in Malaysia, one can assume that MCA's candidates had to rely on substantial Malay votes to get elected. This is also borne out by the fact that 8 of the 13 MCA's successful candidates in 1969 were returned from constituencies with less than 30,000 voters each, while the remaining 5 were elected in districts each of which had less than 40,000 voters (see Table 6.1). The great variation in size between constituencies (Table 6.1) is important because, as a result of a constitutional amendment in 1962 which gave a greater weightage for rural areas than was provided in the 1960 delimitation,<sup>39</sup> non-Malay voting strength

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Kluang Utara, Seberang Tengah, Bagan, Kampar, Kuantan, Alor Star, Sungei Patani, Batu Pahat Dalam, Seremban Barat, Seremban Timor, Kota Bahru Hilir, and Kuala Trengganu Selantan. In 1959, the Alliance won 1 seat in the urban constituencies and 16 in the quasi-urban constituencies. In 1964, it captured 2 urban and 23 quasi-urban seats. See *ibid.*, 365.

<sup>37</sup>The opposition parties' share of the "quasi-urban" seats was: DAP 8, GRM 2, and PMIP 1.

<sup>38</sup>The remaining 20 "rural" seats were won by the opposition parties: PMIP 11, DAP 4, GRM 3 and PPP 2. The seat in Malacca Selatan was undecided due to the death of one of the candidates.

<sup>39</sup>According to Articles 171(1) and 116(4) of the Constitution of the Federation of Malaya, the Election Commission was charged with the





Table 6.1

Size of Constituencies in West Malaysia  
and Seats Won by Parties in 1969

Number of Voters	Number of Constituencies	Alliance						
		UMNO	MCA	MIC	PMIP	DAP	GRM	PPP
10,000-15,000	1	1						
15,000-20,000	3	2				1		
20,000-25,000	10	5	2	1			1	1
25,000-30,000	37	19	6		7	4		1
30,000-35,000	28	15	4	1	5	1	2	
35,000-40,000	12*	9	1			1		
40,000-45,000	5					3	1	1
45,000-50,000	3					1	2	
50,000-55,000	3						2	1
55,000-60,000	1					1		
60,000 & Over	1					1**		
	104	51	13	2	12	13	8	4

Sources: Computed from the election results published in the Straits Times, May 12, 1969, 6, and Nanyang Siang Pau, May 12, 1969, 8.

\* The seat in Malacca Selatan was not decided due to the death of the UMNO candidate before the voting date.

\*\* This constituency, Bungsar in Selangor, is the largest in the country with a total electorate of 81,086. The DAP candidate received 37,050 votes as against 9,648 of his MCA opponent.

responsibility to redelimit the 104 constituencies into 100 districts on the basis of near equality of registered voters rather than population for elections after 1959. This was done in 1960 in a report of the Election Commission but it was rejected by the UMNO leaders who feared that the new delimitation would give the non-Malays an equal voting strength and thus a greater share of political power than they had had. As a result, a constitutional amendment was passed in 1962 and Article 116(4) was repealed, depriving the Election Commission of its independent power to delimit constituencies. The original delimitation of the country into 104 constituencies was retained and a greater weightage was given to the rural areas. The amendment did not define the vital words "rural" and "urban". It has been suggested that the amendment was one of the conspiracies of the "Malay





in each constituency is generally in direct proportion to the number of its electorate. As shown in Table 6.1, the MCA failed to win any seat in the 13 constituencies each of which had an electorate of 40,000 or over. Using 1964 figures for communal composition of the electorate, one can also see that in the 20 constituencies in which MCA's candidates were defeated in 1969, all but one had an absolute majority of Chinese voters (Table 6.2). On the other hand, 4 out of the 13 MCA's successful candidates were returned from constituencies where Chinese electorate did not constitute a majority and 6 of them won their seats in Alliance's strongholds of Johore and Pahang (Table 6.3).

In assessing the results of the 1964 elections, Ratnam and Milne observed that "on Malay votes alone the Alliance could gather just over one third of the total vote. Non-Malay votes, amounting to over a fifth of the total electorate, were vital to its securing a majority of the vote."<sup>40</sup> Using Ratnam and Milne's procedure of calculation, one can assume that out of the 48.4 percent of the total vote cast that the Alliance received in 1969, about 28.8 percent (as

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controlled Alliance Party" to discriminate against the Chinese and Indian communities and to prevent them "from sharing or achieving political power." Alvin Rabushka, Ethnic Components of Political Integration in Two Malayan Cities (Ph.D. Dissertation, Washington University, 1968), 195, 143-175. For other views, see John A. MacDougall, op. cit., 195-216; and T. E. Smith, "The Administration of the Election" in Ratnam and Milne, The Malayan Parliamentary Election of 1964, op. cit., 59-81.

<sup>40</sup>K. J. Ratnam and R. S. Milne, The Malayan Parliamentary Election of 1964, op. cit., 376.



Table 6.2

Seats Lost by the MCA in 1969 and the  
Communal Composition (%) of the Electorate<sup>a</sup>

Constituencies	Malay	Chinese	Indian & Others	Loser's Vote (%)	Winner & Vote (%)
Dato Kramat	24.6	65.6	9.2	24.6	GRM 75.4 <sup>b</sup>
Penang Utara	25.3	63.8	10.9	39.0	DAP 61.0 <sup>b</sup>
Tanjong <sup>c</sup>	3.6	85.9	10.5	18.0	GRM 78.9
Batu Gajah <sup>c</sup>	20.2	69.2	10.6	34.2	DAP 61.3
Bruas <sup>c</sup>	37.0	49.6	13.4	38.9	PPP 41.3
Ipoh	1.9	72.8	15.3	17.9	PPP 82.1 <sup>b</sup>
Larut Selatan <sup>c</sup>	34.3	53.4	12.3	34.3	GRM 49.9
Menglembu	12.5	80.5	7.0	18.8	PPP 82.1 <sup>b</sup>
Sitiawan	26.7	61.3	12.0	40.7	DAP 59.3
Kampar <sup>c</sup>	26.8	64.8	8.4	30.2	DAP 59.9
Teluk Anson <sup>c</sup>	27.7	56.3	16.0	38.4	DAP 55.2
Ulu Kinta	25.3	61.8	12.9	41.5	PPP 58.5
Batu	13.9	78.5	7.6	27.9	GRM 72.1
Bukit Bintang	20.1	72.0	7.9	33.0	GRM 67.0
Bungsar	9.4	79.8	10.8	20.2	DAP 79.8
Damansara	13.6	67.7	18.7	43.7	DAP 56.3
Setapak	25.3	62.3	12.4	44.7	DAP 55.3
Bandar Malacca <sup>c</sup>	15.6	76.2	8.2	24.0	DAP 60.8
Seremban Barat <sup>c</sup>	27.2	56.4	16.4	37.0	DAP 59.4 <sup>b</sup>
Seremban Timor <sup>c</sup>	24.1	59.6	16.3	36.2	DAP 60.3
Average	20.8	66.3	11.8	32.2	63.3

<sup>a</sup>Communal percentage breakdown of the electorate in these 20 constituencies is based on 1964 data. See R. K. Vasil, "The 1964 General Elections in Malaya", *International Studies*, 7, 1 (July 1965), 63. The percentages of losers and winners' votes were computed from the 1969 election results published in the *Straits Times*, May 12, 1969, 6, and *Nanyang Siang Pau*, May 12, 1969, 8. Allowing some changes in the communal composition of the electorate in these constituencies in 1969, the 1964 data are still indicative of the support bases of the MCA candidates.

<sup>b</sup>Successful candidates were either Indians or Ceylonese. Other successful candidates were all Chinese.

<sup>c</sup>Constituencies contested by a third party.





Table 6.3

Seats Won by the MCA in 1969 and the  
Communal Composition of the Electorate<sup>a</sup>

Constituencies	Malay	Chinese	Indians & Others	MCA's Vote (%)
Batu Pahat <sup>b</sup>	38.3%	59.9%	1.8%	c
Kluang Selatan <sup>b</sup>	23.1	69.4	6.5	61.4
Kluang Utara <sup>b</sup>	25.7	64.9	9.4	53.0
Muar Pantai <sup>b</sup>	43.7	54.4	2.2	65.8
Segamat Selatan <sup>b</sup>	27.5	56.3	16.2	73.5
Alor Star	52.5	40.2	7.3	36.3
Kulim Bandar Bahru	54.4	30.7	14.9	69.4
Malacca Tengah	64.0	33.2	2.8	52.2
Bentong <sup>d</sup>	29.2	62.8	8.0	c
Tanjong Malim	34.9	46.4	18.7	46.2
Sepang	30.9	52.3	16.8	55.7
Ulu Selangor	30.3	53.0	16.7	55.1
Bagan	30.1	54.9	15.0	c
Average	37.3	52.2	10.5	56.9

<sup>a</sup>Communal breakdown of the electorate of these 13 constituencies is based on 1964 data. See R. K. Vasil, "The 1964 General Elections in Malaya", *International Studies*, 7, 1 (July 1965), 63. Percentages of MCA's votes were computed from the 1969 election results published in the *Straits Times*, May 12, 1969, 6, and *Nanyang Siang Pau*, May 12, 1969, 8.

<sup>b</sup>Johore's constituencies.

<sup>c</sup>Unopposed.

<sup>d</sup>Pahang's constituency.

against 36.3 percent in 1964) came from Malay electorate and about 19.6 percent (as against 22.2 percent in 1964) were cast by non-Malay voters.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup>The procedure of calculation is described in K. J. Ratnam and R. S. Milne, *The Malayan Parliamentary Election of 1964*, op. cit., 374-375.



In other words, the Alliance attracted about 52.4 percent (as against 67.2 percent in 1964) of the total Malay votes cast and about 43.5 percent (as compared to 48 percent in 1964) of the total non-Malay votes in all. Assuming that this speculation corresponds approximately to the actual distribution of communal votes cast for the various parties, one can see that in 1969 the Alliance suffered assault from both sides and its setback was greater in terms of Malay votes than in terms of non-Malay support.

Although the Alliance share of the non-Malay votes in 1969 amounted to almost a fifth of the total votes (19.6 percent), its loss in Malay support was so substantial that it failed to win a majority of the total electorate in all. If one assumes that the Alliance was built on the basis that the price the UMNO had to pay for its association with the MCA and the MIC in the partnership in order to maintain a semblance of multiracial rule would be compensated by the support that its non-Malay partners would obtain from the non-Malay population,

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The distribution of Malay votes among the various parties in 1969 can be estimated on the assumption that the total Malay turnout constituted 55 percent of the total valid votes and that all who voted for the FMIP were Malay (23.8 percent), and 50 percent of the PR votes (1.2 percent), 10 percent of the GRM votes (8.6 percent), and 5 percent of the votes of other parties (DAP 13.7 percent; PPP 3.9 percent; and Others 0.4 percent) were cast by the Malays. Based on this assumption, one can obtain the Alliance share of the Malay votes as follows: 55 percent - (23.8 percent + 0.6 percent + 0.86 percent + 0.9 percent) = 28.84 percent, which amounted to about 52.4 percent of the total Malay valid votes. It follows that the Alliance share of the non-Malay votes was: 48.4 percent - 28.84 percent = 19.56 percent, which was equal to 43.46 percent of the total non-Malay valid votes.



it would not be difficult to see why some of the UMNO leaders became worried about the viability of the Alliance formula. In the 1969 elections, the Alliance not only failed to gather enough non-Malay votes to compensate UMNO's loss of Malay support but its share of the non-Malay support was actually eroded as well. This seems to account for the fact that when Tan Siew Sin announced MCA's withdrawal from participating in the formation of the new government in May 1969, his decision was openly welcomed by the "ultras" in the UMNO.<sup>42</sup>

In a speech to two hundred Alliance leaders on January 15, 1971, the present Deputy Prime Minister, Dato' Dr. Ismail, warned that if the MCA and the MIC were to continue to be "half-dead" (tak hidup tak mati), the best way for the UMNO was to dissolve the partnership.<sup>43</sup> In response to this charge, Tan Siew Sin issued a strong statement indicating that there was a limit to MCA's tolerance. He defended MCA's position by pointing to the fact that in the 1969 elections UMNO's loss in Malay support was far greater than MCA's loss in non-Malay support.<sup>44</sup> This was true but Tan Siew Sin seemed to have missed the

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<sup>42</sup>In Tunku's words, "When Tun Tan Siew Sin made his statement that the MCA should keep in the background and take no share at all in running the Government, the "Ultras" openly supported him. Many of them breathed a sigh of relief, for what they wanted was in fact happening." See his May 13: Before and After, op. cit., 140.

<sup>43</sup>The speech was delivered to a closed-door meeting of 200 Alliance leaders in Johore Bahru. As soon as the speech was released to the press on January 17, it provoked a crisis among the Alliance partners. See Sin Chew Jit Poh, January 18, 1971, 5.

<sup>44</sup>To strengthen his point, Tan Siew Sin referred to the fact that





essence of the problem. The Malay leaders in the UMNO were certainly concerned with the erosion of MCA's support bases but they were more worried about the decline of Malay support for the UMNO. Most importantly, many Malay leaders tended to attribute UMNO's decline in Malay support to its association with its non-Malay partners in the Alliance. In other words, the MCA and the MIC were to blame not only for their own losses but also for UMNO's setback. To the Malay "ultras", if the UMNO dissociated itself from its non-Malay partners and fought on a platform designed to appeal exclusively to the Malays, it might have been able to win over those Malays who voted for the PMIP and obtain a majority largely on Malay votes. It is in this light that the charge of "tak hidup tak mati" can be understood. As the Alliance is a coalition of unequal partners, the weaker partners have no independent power to decide whether they will remain in or withdraw from the partnership. As will be seen later, the future of the Alliance is to be determined by whether or not the Alliance formula is still an effective vehicle for the UMNO to retain political power and to achieve its goal of building a "Malaysian" nation based on Malay characteristics.

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while the non-Malay-led opposition parties had increased the percentage of popular support from 26.8 in 1964 to 27.8 in 1969, the PMIP had improved its share of the total votes from 14.7 percent in 1964 to 23.7 percent in 1969. He also pointed out that in 1969 the major opposition parties were able to form election alliance in the urban areas to challenge MCA's hold. See Sin Chew Jit Poh, January 19, 1971, 5. See ibid., January 20, 1971, 5 for the reactions of other parties to this "tak hidup tak mati" crisis.



### UMNO's Objectives and the Alliance

The foregoing discussion brings out the second and third factors which are responsible for the inability of the Alliance to maintain its image as a party of equal bargaining partners. These two factors are interrelated. First, although all the three partners of the Alliance are communal parties, the UMNO has been, and can afford to be, more communal than the others. Second, the UMNO is not only a communally-based party but also a party which stands for Malay supremacy.

It was seen in Chapter IV that the UMNO was originally established to fight exclusively for the special rights and privileges of the Malays as the sons of the soil and it succeeded in laying down the framework of a Malay Malaya in 1948. Tunku Abdul Rahman, a Malay prince from Kedah, took over the leadership of the UMNO from Dato' Onn bin Ja'afar in 1951 when the latter resigned as the President of the organization because of his failure to convince his colleagues to open its membership door to the non-Malays.<sup>45</sup> Under Tunku's leadership, the aim of the UMNO was to defend and consolidate the position that the Malay community had won in 1948. In 1951, he declared that

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<sup>45</sup>See Ishak bin Tadin, "Dato Onn and Malay Nationalism, 1946-1951", Journal of Southeast Asian History, 1, 1 (March 1960), 56-88; Charles Gamba, "Parties and Politics in Malaya", Foreign Affairs Reports, 3, 5-6 (May-June 1954), 62; and Vishal Singh, "Recent Political Developments in Malaya", Foreign Affairs Reports, 5, 1 (January 1956), 10-13.





The UMNO is a Malay national organization with the object of preserving the Malay race and the Malay land. ... This country belongs to the Malays and the Malays should be given preferential treatment. ... There are proposals to the effect that independence be handed to 'Malayans'. ... Who are these 'Malayans'? ... From the Malays [the land was] taken, to the Malays it must be returned. ... Let the Malays themselves determine who the 'Malayans' are. ... We must tenaciously adhere to the spirit of Malayism and in this spirit we shall compel them [the British] to hand over the sovereignty of this nation to us.<sup>46</sup>

It is now well-known that both Tunku Abdul Rahman and Tan

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<sup>46</sup>In the same statement, the Tunku added, "When we rose to crush the Malayan Union, these other races were merely looking on. They did not want to get involved because they were aware that what we were demanding were our own rights. ... The Malay Rulers should be together with the people in the struggle for independence. ... They must not permit themselves to be the weapon of other races to crush the struggle and aspirations of the people. ... Remember, if this land is 'Malayanized', royal palaces are certain to be torn down. ... Wherever there is vacant state land in the towns it should be reserved for Malays. I mention this matter in order to safeguard Malay status and Malay spirit so that it will be recognized that it is the Malays who have rights in this country. ... As long as I hold the reins of the UMNO, believe me you, I shall not let down the UMNO because UMNO is Malay and I am convinced that it is the UMNO which will inevitably deliver the Malays." See UMNO Sa-Puloh Tahun 1946-1956 (Ten Years of UMNO 1946-1956), (Penang: Daud Press, 1957), 5-6. It is a documentary collection of the UMNO written in Jawi. In another statement, the Tunku said: "it is for the Malays to demand independence because independence was taken away from them. When we have got our independence back, we shall decide what is best for us to do and who we are to invite to share our independence with." See The Straits Times, August 28, 1951, 8.



Cheng Lock were not enthusiastic about the electoral alliance between the UMNO and the MCA in the 1952 municipal elections in Kuala Lumpur.<sup>47</sup> As a matter of fact, the Tunku had earlier spoken against the Malays throwing "in their lot with others."<sup>48</sup> Therefore, the original birth of the Alliance was not the result of any conscious effort on the part of its leaders to formulate a solution to the communal problems of the country; it was, as mentioned elsewhere, a marriage of convenience between Malay votes and Chinese wealth. However, as the Alliance had scored electoral success one after another, the UMNO found it useful as an election-winning device. In its drive to win independence in 1957, it also found the Alliance useful as a means to confront the British with something like a united front of the three major races. After

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<sup>47</sup> See Margaret F. Clark, op. cit., 24-25. The electoral alliance was originally arranged between Colonel H. S. Lee, the Chairman of the Selangor Branch of the MCA, and Dato' Yahya bin Abdul Razak, the Chairman of the Election Sub-Committee of the Selangor Division of the UMNO. The electoral pact caused great embarrassment to Tan Cheng Lock, the national President of the MCA, who was, at the time, a founder member and an important leader (one-time president) of Dato' Onn bin Ja'afar's Independence of Malaya Party and an outspoken supporter of its non-communal policies.

<sup>48</sup> Declaring that any UMNO member joining Dato' Onn's Independence of Malaya Party (IMP) would be expelled, the Tunku said: "The policies of IMP and UMNO are opposed. It is the policy of IMP to open membership to all persons who are residents in this country. There are no qualifications as to their allegiance, loyalty or birth right. ... Can you form a nation with such flimsy materials? ... It is not fair for the Malays to throw in their lot with others when others refuse to be naturalized, refuse to study the language, and refuse to adopt the customs of the country." The Straits Times, September 18, 1951, 1. Later, he also spoke against the idea of governing the country "by a mixture of races." See The Straits Times, July 1, 1952, 5. See also supra, 120.





independence, the Alliance formula was also found useful as a tool to build up the legitimation of the so-called "racial bargain" written in the constitution. "Who the 'Malayans' are" seemed to have been determined by this "bargain" which is now claimed to involve the non-Malays' acceptance of Malay supremacy (i.e., a Malay Malaya) in return for the grant of citizenship.<sup>49</sup>

It can thus be seen that the communal goals of the UMNO have not changed since it became a partner of the Alliance. In fact, in terms of its communal objectives,<sup>50</sup> the UMNO is little different from the PMIP. What actually distinguishes the UMNO from the PMIP is the former's acceptance of the Alliance as a formula to bring about its communal goals. While the reasons for this acceptance will be examined in a moment, it can be pointed out here that the Alliance formula has been a tool of the UMNO to rationalize (or de-communalize)

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<sup>49</sup>Supra, 336-337.

<sup>50</sup>As set out in the constitution of the UMNO (1960), its aims and objectives are to safeguard and preserve the Constitution of the Federation, especially those provisions relating to the Muslim religion, Malay language and custom, the dignity and prestige of the Malay Rulers, and the special privileges of the Malays; to promote the advancement of Islam and to "foster its growth as the modus vivendi for all Muslims living in the Federation." Speaking to the UMNO Youth and Women's Sections in 1966, Tun Abdul Razak, the present Prime Minister, said: "As a party struggling for the rights and interests of the Malays and the indigenous people, we cannot break away from the wishes of the Malays and the indigenous people who love our country. ... my determination is always to fight for the interests of the nation, country and religion, based on the principles and objects of the UMNO." See Utusan Melayu, July 30, 1966.





its communal claims in the eyes of the non-Malay communities. Since the "racial bargain" was a product of the Alliance formula (a product formulated in Alliance's committee room), the public has been asked to accept it as being "non-communal". As it is sanctioned in the constitution of the country, the "bargain" also becomes "constitutional" or "the entrenched provisions in the Constitution."<sup>51</sup> As a result, the UMNO can be "communal" and still cannot be charged as being "communal" under the Alliance formula. Moreover, as the Malays constitute more than half of the total electorate in Malaya (although this advantage is temporary as the non-Malays can look to a time when they will all become citizens by operation of law), the UMNO can afford to be "communal" and still retain its political power at least in West Malaysia.<sup>52</sup>

One reason for the gradual decline in non-Malay support for the Alliance is the fact that while to most of the non-Malays, the Alliance is supposed to work for the interests of all the three communities through mutual compromise and cooperation, it has, in actual

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<sup>51</sup>The May 13 Tragedy: A Report (Kuala Lumpur: The National Operations Council, October 9, 1969), 85.

<sup>52</sup>See Lee Kuan Yew, The Battle for a Malaysian Malaysia (2), op. cit., 47. In Lee's words, since the Malays commanded 65 percent of the votes in Malaya, "if the Malays got together and were not allowed to mix up, then whichever political party held the majority of 65 per cent should win the majority of the seats and control the country. It was very simple."



fact, been dominated by the ascendancy of the Malay community. Political developments in the country seem to convince many non-Malays that the Alliance is not a device for mutual accommodation among the communities so that they can live together in equality and harmony. Rather, it is seen as a device of the UMNO for building up the legitimization of Malay supremacy through the one-sided accommodation of non-Malay aspirations to the wishes of the Malay community. In recent years, an increasing number of the non-Malays have become aware that the "racial bargain", a basis on which the Alliance has been built, was not a product of Malay and non-Malay consensus but a result of the domination of one community over the others in the process of political change in post-war Malaya. Interestingly enough, as noted in the previous chapter,<sup>53</sup> Tan Siew Sin himself also shared this view in 1956. In his two confidential letters to Dr. Lim Chong Eu,<sup>54</sup> he said that UMNO's constitutional proposals were not "fair" but the MCA had no choice but to "give in to them [the UMNO] because they [the UMNO] happen to be the stronger."<sup>55</sup> After expressing his pessimism "about the future of

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<sup>53</sup>Supra, 341-342.

<sup>54</sup>The two letters were dated September 8, 1956, and September 27, 1956, respectively. For full texts, see Lee Kuan Yew, The Battle for a Malaysian Malaysia (2), op. cit., 57-61. The two letters were released to the public by Dr. Lim in a press conference held by Lee Kuan Yew in June 1965 to expound the case for a Malaysian Malaysia. See supra, 342, note 93.

<sup>55</sup>Tan's letter dated September 8, 1956. Ibid., 57.





Sino-Malay relationships" because "apart from a handful of the top leaders", "the whole UMNO" was "narrow-minded, racialistic and fanatical", Tan Siew Sin added

In such circumstances, I think one can be forgiven if one doubts their [the handful of the UMNO top leaders'] ability to survive very much longer unless they are prepared to fall in with the wishes of the jingoistic majority, and this forms the overwhelming majority of their following. Outside UMNO the position might even be worse. If my analysis of the situation is correct, you [Dr. Lim] will perhaps agree with me that the outlook is far from rosy.<sup>56</sup>

Tan's assessment was not far from the truth. The very basis of UMNO's strength is Malay communalism. The "jingoistic majority" has never been resocialized to change their communal orientations and has now become more active and demanding than ever.

In 1956, Tan Siew Sin suggested that in order to face the pressure from the Malay "jingoistic majority", the MCA should "uphold Chinese interests, first, last and all the time" and "unite the Chinese so completely and so thoroughly that they will be able to face all the trials and difficulties which inevitably lie ahead with equanimity and with confidence."<sup>57</sup> On the one hand, such a policy was bound to per-

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<sup>56</sup> Tan Siew Sin's letter to Dr. Lim Chong Eu dated September 27, 1956. See Lee Kuan Yew, The Battle for a Malaysian Malaysia, op. cit., 59, 61.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 59.



petuate communal exclusiveness and antagonism. On the other, such a policy also encouraged the Chinese to expect more rewards by supporting the MCA. But the bargaining power of the MCA (and the MIC as well) had already been conditioned by its acceptance of the ascendancy of the Malay community. It would seem, therefore, that no matter how united the non-Malays would be in their support of the MCA and the MIC, the dominant position of the UMNO in the Alliance could hardly be challenged within the framework of the Alliance formula. The UMNO not only has strong mass support in the Malay community but also possesses "constitutional rights" to assert Malay supremacy. Thus, the "weaker" would have to yield to the wishes of the "stronger".<sup>58</sup> However, the aspirations of the non-Malays for sharing political power as Malaysians have been aroused but remain largely unsatisfied. This frustration has led an increasing number of the non-Malay youths

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<sup>58</sup>The fact that the weaker has to yield to the wishes of the stronger is not unusual in the world of politics. In fact, law within countries commonly reflects the desire of the strong. As pointed out by Gaetano Mosca, "Mankind is divided into social groups each of which is set apart from other groups by beliefs, sentiments, habits, and interests that are peculiar to it ... the political formula must be based upon the special beliefs and the strongest sentiments of the social group in which it is current, or at least upon the beliefs and sentiments of the particular portion of that group which holds political pre-eminence." See his The Ruling Class (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1939), 71-72. However, unlike a pluralistic society (*supra*, 32-33) where the strong are a shifting majority, a communal society like Malaysia may have to be dominated by the stronger community until such time as the weaker ones have completely been absorbed into the stronger. In Malaysia, the situation is complicated by the fact that except for historical reasons, no community can claim to be the core-unit of the Malaysian society.



and elites to reject the original "racial bargain" and the Alliance formula. They tend to challenge UMNO's dominant position in Malaysian politics rather than to accept MCA and MIC's negative role of merely giving concessions in return for UMNO's moderation in its economic and cultural discrimination against the non-Malays.<sup>59</sup>

While non-Malay support for the Alliance has declined, Malay support for the UMNO has also been weakened by the PMIP. On the one hand, to the non-Malays, the Alliance appears to have been so oriented to Malay communal interests that the role of the MCA and the MIC in the partnership has been reduced to one of impotence. On the other, the aspirations of the Malay ra'ayat have increased more rapidly than the Alliance's ability to satisfy them. In Tan Siew Sin's words, the majority of UMNO's following is "narrow-minded, racialistic and fanatical." They demand not only the rapid improvement of their living conditions but also rapid Malayization in the field of culture, language and education. As a result, the acceptance by the UMNO's top leadership of the Alliance formula and its commitment to "pragmatic gradualism" in the pursuit of its goals of Malayization and Malay economic advancement have been regarded by an increasing number of the Malay youths and elites as a "sell-out" of Malay interests to

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<sup>59</sup> Such a negative role was well described by one MCA leader who told the author in an interview in May 1968: "Without the MCA, I dare to say, all Chinese schools would have been finished by now. But because of the MCA, we still have Chinese primary schools provided by government's fund; we still have Chinese newspapers; and Chinese businessmen still run their businesses as usual."





non-Malay capitalist domination. The shift of a portion of the Malay votes in 1969 from the UMNO to the PMIP and the attempt of Dr. Mahathir bin Mohammed and other "ultras" to force Tunku Abdul Rahman to resign as the Prime Minister after the May riots in 1969<sup>60</sup> seemed to indicate that "the jingoistic majority" both inside and outside the UMNO had become increasingly impatient about the "gradual" approach to the problems of national integration and economic betterment of the Malay masses adopted by Tunku's moderate leadership. The counterattack that the Tunku had launched against the "ultras" in his party in the last quarter of 1969 did not seem to have reversed the trend of the UMNO toward extremism. Judging from the policies of the National Operations Council<sup>61</sup> since the May-13th riots in 1969 and the actual resignation of Tunku Abdul Rahman as the Prime Minister of the country in September 1970, it seems safe to say that "it is PMIP and the UMNO Ultras who seem to emerge as the real victors of the whole affair."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>See Tunku Abdul Rahman, May 13: Before and After, op. cit., 117-162.

<sup>61</sup>The National Operations Council was a body set up to deal with all matters pertaining to the Emergency declared after the outbreak of racial violence on May 13, 1969. It was headed by Tun Abdul Razak because, in Tunku's words, "He was the right man, younger, more active, full of vim and vigor, and better suited to the arduous task of restoring the country to normalcy in view of his vast experience in handling the portfolios of both Defence and National Development." Ibid., 100. Together with the Emergency cabinet (which was headed by the Tunku until September 1970), the Council ruled the country until March 1971 when the Parliament met for the first time after the May elections in 1969.

<sup>62</sup>See Stuart Drummond and David Hawkins, op. cit., 335. See also



Tunku Abdul Rahman's defence against the attack of the so-called Malay "ultras" inside and outside the UMNO was outlined in his book May 13: Before and After published in September 1969. From this book, one can see that the Tunku was trying to convince the Malay community that the Alliance formula was the best possible approach to bring about a Malay Malaysia. His reasons seem to be based on the following arguments: First, since nation-building is a long process, a "Malaysian" nation could not be built in a single day.<sup>63</sup> In a communal society like Malaysia, the process might even be longer. Second, the Malays already obtained what they had wanted in the constitution. Therefore, "if the 'Ultra' Malays want to overturn the Constitution, then they will be blindly stumbling downhill into backwardness

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Jerome R. Bass, "Malaysia: Continuity or Change?", Asian Survey, 10, 2 (February 1970), 152-160. The steps taken after the riots include, inter alia, (1) a new education policy to hasten the development of Malay as "Bahasa Malaysia"; (2) the reexamination of certain types of citizenship papers issued to the non-Malays in the past (see supra, 334, note 78); (3) encouraging the Malays to take part in industry and commerce; (4) the setting up of job training centers and the National University for Malay youths; (5) stringent regulations governing non-citizen employment; (6) the proclamation of the Rukunegara (National Ideology) calling for respect of God, the Rulers, the Constitution, and law and morality; and (7) constitutionally forbidding public discussion on questions relating to the Rulers, Malay religion, the national language, and Malay special privileges.

<sup>63</sup> For example, the Tunku wrote: "Little did they [the Ultras] realize that for many years past other newly-independent countries had been trying to introduce a national language without success, and a number of them are still having difficulty with this problem. Nor did they seem to realize that even India, with one people but of many ethnic groups, has not been able to implement a national language yet, so the impatience the 'Ultras' have shown is quite unreasonable." May 13: Before and After, op. cit., 148.





and chaos."<sup>64</sup> As long as the Malays were patient, and "given the chance, and with continued peace in this country with the attendant prosperity that goes with peace and development",<sup>65</sup> the Tunku argued, a Malay Malaysia could be created in the long run through the Alliance formula. To the Tunku, the Alliance was important not only because "the combined population of the other races just falls short of half of the number of Malay population"<sup>66</sup> [sic], but also because "the Government of this country must represent all the races" in order to maintain "the confidence of the people."<sup>67</sup> Finally, if the Malays were to lose their patience and demanded immediate Malayization, the reactions from the non-Malay communities would be great because "a policy of forcing everything down others' throat is wrong in a country with a mixed population."<sup>68</sup> If a radical policy for Malay rights were pursued, the Tunku maintained, peace and prosperity on which racial

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<sup>64</sup>May 13: Before and After, op. cit., 149.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 148.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 141. In fact, the combined population of the non-Malay communities constitutes more than half of the total population. The Tunku seems to have included all the indigenous people in the category "Malay". For population figures, see supra, 51, Table 2.1.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 143.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 149.



harmony and goodwill would rest would be destroyed and chaos would follow. As a result, the Tunku said, the Malays would stand to lose as what they had already secured in the constitution might be shattered. In short, the Tunku stated

Let me repeat that this nation had been accepted by all the other races living here as being fundamentally a Malay country, and this will remain so unless the Malays themselves decide to turn everything upside down and thus create a veritable hell among us all.<sup>69</sup>

On the question of the Malay rulers, the Tunku wrote:

The 'Ultras' are all Malays, who as a race have always had the tradition of Rulers. The respect in which they hold their Rulers is integral to their whole way of life. Therefore, it is difficult to understand why these 'Ultras', if they are proud of being Malays, or part-Malay, should wish to throw away a heritage which runs in Malay blood.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>69</sup> May 13: Before and After, op. cit., 147. In another paragraph, the Tunku wrote: "I repeat once again that this is a Malay country, but it is up to the Malays themselves to play an active and constructive part in every aspect of society, to take up the challenge that a brighter future offers, bearing always in mind that it is the Constitution, its spirit and its application, which is [sic] and will be the safeguard of the security and progress of us all." Ibid., 149. Emphasis in the first citation was added.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 152-153. According to this evaluation, both the rulers and the Supreme Head are symbolic of the Malay race and Malay tradition rather than of the Malaysian nation as a whole. The Tunku spoke of the pride of being Malays or part-Malay rather than being Malaysians. The whole statement would make a non-Malay feel uneasy.



He charged that the "ultras" had sought to abolish the sultanates without knowing that "Politicians come and go, parties rise and fall, but Rulers remain."<sup>71</sup> To him, the rulers are the bulwark of Malay special position and "a permanent guarantee of stability and continuity in administration."<sup>72</sup> The Tunku urged the Malays to uphold and stand by the constitution for it provides a double guarantee for Malay special position. It confers on the Malays special rights and privileges and these special rights and privileges are, in turn, safeguarded by the Rulers who do not change like political parties.

It can be seen that Tunku Abdul Rahman and the "ultras" did not differ much in terms of their ultimate goals, although the latter were more oriented to the KMM's brand of Malay communalism.<sup>73</sup> They differed in their approach rather than in their objectives. Therefore, there is reason to believe that if the Alliance were capable of meeting the rising demands of the Malays for economic betterment, the Malay ra'ayat might be convinced to accept the Alliance formula to bring about Malayization. But one should also remember that the improvement of Malays' living conditions and the creation of more em-

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<sup>71</sup> May 13: Before and After, op. cit., 154.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>73</sup> See supra, 179-181, 212-214.





employment opportunities for them are partly dependent upon the progress of Malayization. For example, the Malay-educated youths whose number is increasing as a result of a greater effort to promote Malay as Bahasa Malaysia might find the scope of employment limited if the languages used in businesses and industries were not Malayized at a speed that would meet the rising expectations of these Malay youths. If the UMNO were to follow Tunku's policy and to be committed to a slow process of Malayization, it is still questionable that the Malay masses would be patient enough to wait until such process deliver its promised results. Furthermore, as the three partners of the Alliance are communal parties, each of which tries to cater to the interests of its own community, communal frictions and clashes are inherent in the Alliance system. Thus, Malayization is bound to reinforce communal sentiments rather than hasten the process of political integration, whether it be attempted through gradual or radical means.

### The Two Faces of the Alliance

The relatively high capability of the Alliance formula to maintain intercommunal peace and stability in the past 15 years can be attributed to a number of factors,<sup>74</sup> some of which have undergone

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<sup>74</sup>Some of these factors are discussed in Micael Leifer, "Politics and Constitutional Stability in Malaysia", Parliamentary Affairs, 22, 3 (Summer 1969), 202-209.



significant change in recent years.

First of all, the Alliance has been able to hold together because it has been a coalition of a particular group of elites from the three communities. James C. Scott observes

What collaboration has occurred has been for the most part among that thin upper stratum of Western educated Chinese, Indians, and Malays, many of whom are civil servants. ... This stratum alone has the common experiences of English education and modern, urban occupations that permit some common outlook and interpretation of events.<sup>75</sup>

This quality of the Alliance leadership is both an asset and a weakness of the partnership. On the one hand, the common educational background and modern outlook of the Alliance leaders not only facilitate their mutual dialogue but also strengthen their commitment to a liberal and yet conservative approach to the national problems of Malaysia. On the other hand, since the Alliance leadership is confined to a small segment of the elite sub-culture, the elite-mass gap is bound to be great. As a result, Alliance's leaders are very vulnerable to attack by their vernacular-educated counterparts in their respective communities who have a different outlook and interpretation

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<sup>75</sup>James C. Scott, Political Ideology in the New Nations: Generalizations from the Malaysian Experience (Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 1968), 17. See also idem, Political Ideology in Malaysia (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968). The latter is a slightly revised version of the former.





of events.<sup>76</sup>

In the past the Alliance had been able to keep the leadership of the MCA and the MIC in the hands of the English-educated elites. This fact is important because, as pointed out by the former Secretary-General of the UMNO, Ismail bin Yusof, "Alliance unity depends on the type of leaders who take office."<sup>77</sup> Under the backing of the UMNO,

whenever sections of MCA have pushed their 'communal' claims to the point where a rupture with UMNO is threatened, the more moderate elements have reasserted themselves and forced the 'chauvinists' to withdraw.<sup>78</sup>

This has been possible because of a number of factors. First, in the immediate post-independence years, the English-educated elites were still the favored class under the new political order. As a result, the English-educated non-Malays could still hope to obtain a limited share of political power and responsibility both in the government and in the administration. Because of this, a large portion of the

<sup>76</sup>Supra, 99-101. Tunku Abdul Rahman's way of life, for example, was under the attack of the "ultras" in 1969. The Tunku wrote: "They condemn me for poker-playing, for attending horse-racing, and for taking a very great interest in sports." May 13: Before and After, op. cit., 163.

<sup>77</sup>The remark was made before the MCA elected its new president in 1958. Enche Ismail bin Yusof warned that "the outcome of the MCA elections would have an important bearing on the future of the Alliance." The Straits Times, March 22, 1958, 1.

<sup>78</sup>Margaret Roff, "The Malayan Chinese Association, 1948-1965", op. cit., 45.



English-educated non-Malays had been able to unite behind the MCA and the MIC in order to share whatever power was possible in the Alliance. Second, the English-educated elites in the MCA and the MIC have been mostly business-oriented. Their association with the Alliance seem to provide for the business community an important access to the government. In order to maintain this access, they have been prepared to give certain fundamental concessions to the UMNO. Third, although the Malays are given special privileges in the various fields, "the speed with which an economic programme for the Malays has been launched has not been accompanied by a similar increase in the capacity of the Malays to take proper advantage of the opportunities offered to them."<sup>79</sup> Moreover, many Malays have been satisfied with a "pension" by lending their business licences or permits to the non-Malays.<sup>80</sup> As a result, the privileged position of the Malays has had only a limited impact on Chinese and Indian business interests. In order that such a policy should continue, the non-Malay business group has been willing to support the Alliance. Fourth, before 1967 the English-educated non-Malays might have felt that their future as a

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<sup>79</sup>See J. H. Beaglehole, "Malay Participation in Commerce and Industry: The Role of RIDA and MARA", Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies, 7, 3 (November 1969), 217. See also supra, 91-92.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 240, note 7; and supra, 91, note 53. See also S. M. Huang-Thio, "Constitutional Discrimination under the Malaysian Constitution", Malaya Law Review, 6, 1 (July 1964), 1-16.



favored class would not be threatened in the foreseeable future, judging from the fact that the government had recognized the English-medium schools as part of the national schools. Finally, as the practices of the government have shown, the Alliance has not hesitated to use the special and emergency power of the government to deal with non-Malay agitators through detention, the deprivation of citizenship, or other pressures. The eviction of Singapore, Alliance's intervention in Sabah Alliance's dispute in favor of the USNO and the use of emergency power to remove Dato Stephen Kalong Ningkan from his Chief Ministership in Sarawak<sup>81</sup> were other instances in which the Alliance sought to silence its challengers. Under such circumstances, a significant portion of the non-Malay communities, especially those representing the business interests and the English-educated elites, might consider it vital to support the MCA and the MIC so that a link between the non-Malay and the Malay communities could be maintained.

In recent years, however, the basic factors which had heretofore contributed to the ascendancy of the English-educated elites in the Alliance have undergone some significant changes. As mentioned earlier, the UMNO has been, and can afford to be, more communal than

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<sup>81</sup>See Gordon P. Means, "Eastern Malaysia: the Politics of Federalism", Asian Survey, 8, 4 (April 1968), 289-308; idem, Malaysian Politics, op. cit., 371-390; S. M. Thio, "Dismissal of Chief Ministers", Malaya Law Review, 8, 2 (December 1966), 283-291; and Craig A. Lockhard, "Parties, Personalities and Crisis Politics in Sarawak", Journal of Southeast Asian History, 8, 1 (March 1967), 111-121.





its partners. Consequently, in meeting the rising expectations of the Malays, unlike its repressive attitude toward the non-Malay agitators, the UMNO has sought to accommodate their aspirations rather than to suppress their articulations. A vicious circle has thus been created. In order to compete with the PMIP in winning Malay support, the UMNO cannot afford to suppress the articulation of Malay communal demands which have been regarded as their legitimate "birth-rights", but has become more and more "communal" in its approach to the Malay masses. But the more the UMNO becomes "communal" in its appeal, the greater the pressure from the Malay community becomes. As a result, the UMNO has become increasingly demanding in the Alliance for more concessions from its non-Malay partners.

Speaking to the Alliance Convention in Kuching in 1967, Tunku Abdul Rahman said

What is worrying UMNO today is that the PMIP attack which is gaining support from among the Malays is that the UMNO is selling out this country to the Chinese. ... UMNO is a pillar of the Alliance strength. All member parties of the Alliance should try to help UMNO to maintain its strength. ... The Alliance strength is mainly derived from the solid Malay support in the field and it is this support which the PMIP hope to win over to their side. ... the MCA ... must try and understand and in the interest of the Alliance cooperate with UMNO if they find it hard to agree. Above all I must warn that any expression of divergent views is going to play right

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into the hands of the enemies. The UMNO-MCA-MIC leaders must be careful about it and so they must think well before they come out with their statement.<sup>82</sup>

As a matter of fact, Tunku's warning was applicable most of the time only to the leaders of the MCA and the MIC. This is quite understandable because, as pointed out by the Tunku himself, "the Alliance strength is mainly derived from the solid Malay support in the field." In order to maintain and augment this strength, the UMNO has been prepared to modify its policy of "accommodation in the short run and assimilation in the long run" and to adopt some more radical economic measures to appease Malay communal sentiments. To accomplish this, the leaders of the MCA and the MIC have been asked to cooperate and show understanding. But this practice results in the intensification of what this author would call the two-faced or double-standard style of UMNO politics which not only shakes the basis of the Alliance formula and threatens the hold of the English-educated elites in the Alliance but also generates intercommunal fear, distrust and antagonism.

The two-faced style of UMNO politics was well described by a statement of Lee Kuan Yew in 1965:

What they [UMNO's leaders] are reported to be saying in the English and Chinese press is not the same sometimes as what they are reported to be saying in the Malay press to

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<sup>82</sup> See The Straits Times, October 28, 1967. For full text, see The Eastern Sun, November 1, 1967.





the Malay people. This fact is very important.<sup>83</sup>

Lee's allegation can easily be confirmed if one examines the utterances of UMNO's leaders published in the Utusan Melayu and the Straits Times or Sin Chew Jit Poh, or in the Merdeka (UMNO's official organ written in Jawi) and the Alliance (Alliance's official publication written in English and Chinese). One can also find some differences in their statements printed in Rumi (romanized) and Jawi (Arabic script) Malay newspapers because most of the non-Malays can read only Rumi Malay.

To a Malay audience, the UMNO leaders have been prone to appeal to Malay communal sentiments and to arouse Malay fear of the opposition parties. The Malays have been told that "UMNO's worth is in terms of the blood of the Malays in Malaysia",<sup>84</sup> "UMNO's survival means the survival of the Malay race" and "if UMNO perished the Malay race would also perish."<sup>85</sup> They have also been promised that "in due time Malaysia will just be the Malay race"<sup>86</sup> and

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<sup>83</sup> Lee Kuan Yew, "A Malaysian Malaysia", Malaysian Mirror, 1, 13 (May 29, 1965), 6.

<sup>84</sup> Remark by the Mentri Besar of Johore, Dato Haji Osman Sa'at. He told an UMNO gathering that if the opposition parties were to rule Malaysia, all Malay interests would be wiped out. See Utusan Melayu, October 8, 1968.

<sup>85</sup> Statement by Mohamed Khir Johari. See Utusan Melayu, July 14, 1966.

<sup>86</sup> Tun Abdul Razak's remark. See The Eastern Sun, August 22, 1966.



If the opposition rule this country  
 ... the concept of one nation and  
 one language which we [the UMNO] are  
 trying to build and the policy of  
 helping the poor and the have-nots  
 will be threatened. If they come to  
 power they will stop all this and  
 switch to their own policies which  
 will lead to disaster.<sup>87</sup>

When the Indonesian confrontation was ended in 1966, the Malays were told that "The signing of the [peace] treaty marks the opening of a new era in relations and friendship between the peoples of one race"<sup>88</sup> and that "blood and language are eternal ties."<sup>89</sup> In short, the UMNO has been presented to the Malay ra'ayat not only as the champion of their interests but also as the savior of the Malay race and the Muslim religion. The Utusan Melayu, which is a semi-official newspaper of the UMNO, has been allowed to disseminate the idea of Malay supremacy.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>Tun Abdul Razak's speech to the Kaum Ibu of the UMNO. See Utusan Melayu, April 28, 1968.

<sup>88</sup>Statement by Tunku Abdul Razak. Berita Harian, August 13, 1966. The Indonesian Foreign Minister, Adam Malik, also described the peace treaty as "a great victory for the Malay race."

<sup>89</sup>Remark by Tunku Abdul Rahman. Berita Harian, August 13, 1966.

<sup>90</sup>For an elaboration of the communal outlook of the Utusan Melayu, see Lee Kuan Yew, The Battle for a Malaysian Malaysia (1) and (2), (Singapore: Ministry of Culture, 1965), passim. Utusan Melayu's motto is "To fight for religion, race and homeland" and its editorials, news reports and special articles have been oriented to the defence of Malay supremacy and the Muslim religion. Its views on communal





During election campaigns, Alliance's banners in different languages conveyed different messages. For example, in a state by-election in 1966-1967, the poster in Malay urged the Malays to "Vote for the Alliance for the Interest of Your Race, Religion, and Native Land" (Undi-lah Perikatan Untuk Kepentingan Bangsa, Ugama dan Tanah Ayer), while the Chinese and Tamil banners asked the non-Malays to "Vote for the Alliance for the Interest of Peace, Progress and Prosperity."<sup>91</sup> In the 1969 elections, the UMNO campaigned in predominantly

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relations are sometimes very extreme and shocking to the non-Malays. For example, in an article entitled "Malays with Islamic Spirit and the Concept of Malaysian Malaysia", Che Abdullah Basmeh wrote: "The Concept of Malaysian Malaysia is aimed at destroying the Malay race in its own homeland and destroying Islam and the Islamic State of Malaysia." Utusan Melayu, July 16, 1965. In another special comment written by Bajang, a 7-point plan was suggested to "expedite the process of racial integration": (1) dissolve all Chinese, Tamil and Punjabi schools; (2) ban all non-Malay languages and all films using non-Malay languages; (3) ban all non-Malay scripts from being written at any public place or on signboards of shophouses; (4) ban all non-Malay newspapers; (5) ban the use of all symbols which are not Malaysian in characteristics like the dragon symbol; (6) ban the construction of all buildings which are not Malaysian in architecture; and (7) ban all un-Malaysian costumes. Utusan Melayu, April 9, 1968. Utusan Melayu is the most influential Malay paper in the country. It is written in Jawi and widely read by literate kampong Malays. Commenting on the expulsion from Malaysia of the British journalist, Alex Josey, in 1965, one Australian newspaper wrote: "If the Tengku really believed it necessary to take emergency measures to prevent journalists from 'disrupting racial harmony' he would go no further than Utusan Melayu, the newspaper which carries distorted extremist Malay racial views into every village in Malaysia." The Sydney Daily Telegraph, July 10, 1965.

<sup>91</sup> See The Rocket, 2, 1 (January 1967), 1. This matter was brought up in the Parliament by D. R. Seenivasagam in January 1967. See Dewan Ra'ayat Debates, January 1967.





Malay constituencies not so much as a partner of the Alliance but as the protector of the Malay race. In response to the PMIP charge that the "Malay feudalists" in the Alliance had sold out to the "Chinese capitalists", the UMNO replied that "The Alliance we offer is the only way of protecting you [the Malays] from Chinese domination at the same time bringing you [the Malays] the fruits of economic development."<sup>92</sup> Throughout the campaign, UMNO's leaders set out to convince the Malays that the PMIP was Communist and had been financed by Peking, while they avoided to lodge the charge that the PMIP was anti-Chinese because if they did, it might very well constitute a good reason for the Malays to vote the PMIP.<sup>93</sup>

On the other hand, the non-Malays have been approached by the Alliance leaders with a different style. In the face of a non-Malay audience, the leaders of the Alliance usually emphasize the importance of peace, prosperity, communal goodwill and intercommunal accommodation and cooperation. This plea for intercommunal harmony and accommodation is often accompanied by a series of warnings. Usually, the non-Malays are told by the UMNO leaders that the Malays have already made much "sacrifice" for the Chinese and that "It is now the

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<sup>92</sup>The Times (London), May 9, 1969, 7. See also The Globe and Mail (Toronto), May 10, 1969, 9.

<sup>93</sup>See Stuart Drummond and David Hawkins, op. cit., 325. No matter which term was used, "Communist" or "Peking", it had a close relation with the Chinese in the mental map of the Malays. Such tactics tended to reinforce Malay fear of the Chinese.



turn of the Chinese to show that they are not just offering lip service to the Malays."<sup>94</sup> The non-Malays are advised to compare their position in Malaysia with that of their counterparts in other Southeast Asian countries. "I must ask non-Malays", the Tunku stated, "to be fair and considerate and not to make unreasonable demands. It is well to remember that no natives of any country in the world have given away so much as the Malays have done."<sup>95</sup> The non-Malays' "entry to Malaysia was not through invitation and the return would not be prevented."<sup>96</sup> "If the Malays are not given protection you [the non-Malays] will find that they will join the ranks of extremists and in course of time you [the non-Malays] will find Malaysia joining Indonesia."<sup>97</sup>

In order to "help UMNO to maintain its strength", Tun Tan Siew Sin, the President of the MCA, urged the Chinese to recognize the fact that the Chinese population in Southeast Asia constituted only 5 percent of the 200 million people in the areas. If the Chinese

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<sup>94</sup>Tunku Abdul Rahman's speech to an election rally in Batu Pahat in 1957. In the same speech, he warned that an Alliance defeat would have "the most unsatisfactory repercussions" throughout the country. He added, "if there was a defeat UMNO members would probably demand a review of the partnership with the MCA." See The Straits Times, December 14, 1957, 9.

<sup>95</sup>Tunku Abdul Rahman's statement in a broadcast on the question of citizenship. See The Straits Times, April 23, 1956, 7.

<sup>96</sup>Speech of the Sultan of Perak. Utusan Melayu, November 21, 1966.

<sup>97</sup>Tunku Abdul Rahman's speech to a solidarity rally marking the national language month. Utusan Melayu, April 26, 1965.





in Malaysia failed to adjust to this fact, he said, "our [Chinese] descendants could pay heavily for our lack of foresight, as has happened elsewhere in South-East Asia."<sup>98</sup> The Chinese were also told that Malaysian "nationhood" was based on "Malay nationalism", and that the moderate leadership of Tunku Abdul Rahman and Tun Abdul Razak was the only hope for the Chinese. "We [the Chinese] cannot fail them [the Tunku and Razak] for if we [the Chinese] do we [the Chinese] cannot foresee what will be the future [sic] when they [the Tunku and Razak] are no longer with us [the Chinese]".<sup>99</sup> During the 1969 election campaign, these tactics, or to use Lee Kuan Yew's term, "blackmail",<sup>100</sup> had been applied time and again by Alliance's leaders. For example, the MCA candidate, Dato' Liew Why Hone, told his constituents in Kampar that "The voters will be taking a plunge into the

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<sup>98</sup> Tan Siew Sin's speech at the Central General Assembly of the MCA on May 6, 1967. See Consolidation of National Unity: Vision and Reality (Kuala Lumpur: MCA Headquarters, 1967), 12-13.

<sup>99</sup> Speech by Siow Loong Hin, MCA's Director of Publicity, in a motion of thanks to Tan Siew Sin's address to the MCA Central General Assembly. For full text, see The Eastern Sun, August 17, 1967, 8. See also supra, 364, note 21.

<sup>100</sup> In a comment on Alliance's communal approach, Lee Kuan Yew said in 1965: "Their [UMNO's] intention is to build up [the] atmosphere of communalism and racism in which those who do not conform are blackmailed with bloodshed, and those who speak up are painted as enemies." The Battle for a Malaysian Malaysia (2), *op. cit.*, 41. Lee also revealed that Dr. Lim Chong Eu, the former President of the MCA, had told him that "Everytime they [the UMNO] wanted to have things their way in the Alliance, they used the threat: 'blood will flow'. The meaning is our [non-Malays'] blood will flow" (*ibid.*, 18).



unknown if they reject the Alliance."<sup>101</sup> Tun Tan Siew Sin echoed this with the warning that "if the opposition parties won in the urban areas ... Malaysian citizens of Chinese origin would face an unprecedented tragedy because it would mean that the Chinese would not be represented in the Government."<sup>102</sup> To meet the electoral challenge of the GRM in Penang, "the Government has sought desperately to rouse fears among the Chinese that voting for an opposition party spells immediate doom because of inter-racial rioting."<sup>103</sup> Tun Abdul Razak declared,

Penang cannot afford to have a non-Alliance state government. Beautiful Penang will suffer a lot of hardship the moment it opts out of the national stream. ... This is politics. ... We reward support with benevolence. This is no blackmail. This is straight and sincere talk.<sup>104</sup>

In theory, the Alliance formula was based on the principle of communal accommodation and cooperation, but in practice, it had to resort to communal appeal and "blackmail" to maintain its hold when it was seriously challenged by opposition parties. In 1964, when Indone-

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<sup>101</sup>The Straits Times, May 8, 1969, 4.

<sup>102</sup>Sin Chew Jit Poh, April 3, 1969, 9.

<sup>103</sup>Fred Emery reported in The Times (London), May 10, 1969, 8.

<sup>104</sup>The Straits Times, April 17, 1969, 4.



sia's confrontation was still going on, the Alliance was effective in winning support because it was the only major party which was prepared to defend Malaysia against Indonesia's aggression. But after the 1964 elections, the political climate in Malaysia underwent a significant change. First, the challenge to Malay domination posed by Lee Kuan Yew in 1964-1965 had done much to arouse not only the awareness of the non-Malays as regards their inferior political status and the actual working of the Alliance formula but also a strong reaction from the Malay community. As a result of this challenge, Singapore was forced to leave Malaysia; but Lee Kuan Yew succeeded in leaving behind him the concept of a Malaysian Malaysia.<sup>105</sup> Second, after the end of Indonesia's confrontation, non-Malay fear of Malay domination was enhanced due to the repeated talks by Malay leaders and newspapers about the concept of Maphilindo and the "blood-brother" relationship between Malaysia and Indonesia,<sup>106</sup> and the lenient attitude of the Alliance toward the members of the Tentera Sabilullah (Army of the Holy War) who were commonly believed to have engaged in the racial riots in Penang and Kedah in 1967.<sup>107</sup> The repeated intervention

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<sup>105</sup>Infra, Chapter VIII.

<sup>106</sup>Supra, 125-127, 402.

<sup>107</sup>The Tentera Sabilullah, which had 14 area chiefs who "wield considerable influence among the kampong people", was discovered in





of the Alliance in Sabah and Sarawak's politics had also alienated the support of a portion of the non-Malay communities in the two states. Under such circumstances, more and more non-Malays began to support the concept of a Malaysian Malaysia as the best possible alternative to the status quo.

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December 1967. More than one hundred of its members were identified but later pardoned by the Sultan of Kedah in a "repentance ceremony". See The Straits Times, December 24, 25, 27, 28, and 31, 1967 for the whole story. It was originally reported that the Army of the Holy War "had planned to cause disturbances to bring about racial clashes" (ibid., December 24, 1967, 1). Later, the Secretary for Home Affairs, Sheikh Abdullah bin Sheikh Abu Bakar, pointed out that the "98 self-confessed secret society members pardoned by the Sultan are not on police records and they have not committed any offence other than the fact that they belonged to a secret organization as disclosed by their own admission" (ibid., December 27, 1967, 10). Tunku Abdul Rahman, the then Prime Minister, also explained that he did not "consider them as dangerous elements and the Government does not think that they are a threat to the security and peace of the state. Therefore, it is only right that those who had joined the organization should come forward and declare before the Sultan that they would not repeat the same mistake" (ibid., 28 December, 1967, 9). Such explanation could not satisfy the non-Malay public. In fact, many Chinese who were suspected of Communist sympathy had been detained although most of them were not "on police records" or had committed no actual offence. Raising the question of pardoning the members of the Holy Army in the Dewan Ra'ayat, D. R. Seenivasagam asked: "Who has the authority to pardon criminal acts of treason and racial warfare? Why is the Home Affairs Minister keeping quiet and not arresting them and treating them the same way as non-bumiputras? Does this mean the Government approves of a holy war?" Seenivasagam pointed out that the only way to prevent a repetition of the Penang riots was to have a more liberal policy of racial justice and equal opportunities for all. He wanted to know why "99 per cent" of the staff of Malaysian Embassies and High Commissions were bumiputras. See The Straits Times, January 24, 1968, 6. See also Dewan Ra'ayat Debates, January 23, 1968. For an account of the Penang riots in 1967 in which several hundreds of LPM's members and members of Chinese secret societies were detained, see Nancy L. Snider, "What Happened in Penang?", Asian Survey, 8, 12 (December 1968), 960-975.



The most significant change in the Malaysian political scene since 1964 is the fact that the Malaysian-Malaysia political group has been able to attract the support of an increasing number of the English-educated non-Malay elites. As the concept of a Malaysian Malaysia is committed to multilingualism and cultural pluralism, it also has an increasing appeal to the vernacular-educated non-Malay elites, most of whom have long been alienated from Alliance politics. Consequently, for the first time in Malaysia, there has been a tendency for both types of non-Malay elites to work together in a common effort to achieve their political goals.

These developments have resulted in the increasing isolation of the English-educated elites within the MCA and the MIC. While they have already lost the support of most of the vernacular-educated non-Malay elites, they have, since 1964, been facing the prospect of losing the backing of an increasing number of the English-educated non-Malay elites. This has come about not only because the concept of a Malaysian Malaysia appears attractive to them, but also because the fact that the UMNO has, in recent years, gradually given up its policy of moderation and begun to accelerate the process of Malayization has threatened the status of the English-educated non-Malay elites as a favored class in the Malaysian society. The English-medium primary schools are now being transformed into Malay schools. The various

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government departments have now refused to accept English letters in their daily administration. Most of the legislative assemblies at the state level in West Malaysia now conduct their proceedings solely in Malay. Since September 1967, all new lawyers have been required to pass a national language test before being admitted to the bar. There has been increasing pressure that the same requirement should also be applied to doctors, engineers and other professions.<sup>108</sup> Moreover, the renewals of business licences have been refused if business signboards have not been written in Malay.<sup>109</sup> Business accounts have also been required to be entered in Malay. All these changes have adversely affected, not only the vernacular-educated non-Malays, but the English-educated non-Malay elites as well. The racial riots in 1969 in which Malay army and police failed to maintain impartiality,<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> See the editorial of the Utusan Melayu, March 24, 1967.

<sup>109</sup> See The Straits Times, April 8, 1970, 8. See also supra, 330-331.

<sup>110</sup> For details of the riots, see John Slimming, Malaysia: Death of a Democracy (London: John Murray, 1969); Felix V. Gagliano, Communal Violence in Malaysia 1969: The Political Aftermath (Athens, Ohio: Southeast Asia Series No. 13, Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1970; idem, "Rats, Flies and Broken Beads: The Malaysian Political System's Reaction to the May Riots", Asia, 17 (Winter 1969-70), 71; Gerald P. Dartford, "Crisis in Malaysia", Current History, 57, 340 (December 1969), 349-354, 367; Anthony Reid, "The Kuala Lumpur Riots and the Malaysian Political System", Australian Outlook, 23, 3 (December 1969), 258-278; Jerome R. Bass, op. cit., 152-160; The May Tragedy in Malaysia: A Collection of Essays (Melbourne: Monash University, July 1969); Tunku Abdul Rahman, May 13: Before and After, op. cit.; and National Operations Council, The May 13 Tragedy: A Report, op. cit..



and the subsequent massive reassessment of citizenship papers of about 250,000 non-Malays have further eroded the confidence of the non-Malay elites and masses in the Alliance government.

From the Malay point of view, however, a multilingual and multicultural Malaysia would benefit only the non-Malays and constitute a threat to the vested interests of the Malays as being the sons and owners of the soil. Thus, "a Malaysian Malaysia" has been considered by most Malays as a "communal" concept designed, on the one hand, to perpetuate non-Malay economic domination, and on the other, to undermine Malay political supremacy. "The Malaysia-for-Malaysians concept", Tunku Abdul Rahman declared during the 1969 election campaign, "is aimed at ... abolishing Malay rights."<sup>111</sup> This fear seems to account for the increasing hostility of the Malay community toward the concept of a non-communal Malaysia. As this fear becomes widespread through the agitation of the Malay "ultras", it intensifies Malay desire for the perpetuation of their political supremacy and for rapid Malayization in the fields of language and culture as an answer to the problem of forming a "Malaysian" nation. Under such circumstances, the distinction between the moderate leadership of the UMNO and the "ultras" has gradually lost its meaning. As pointed out by Tun Tan Siew Sin in 1956,

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<sup>111</sup> The Straits Times, April 18, 1969, 6. Dr. Mahathir bin Mohammed stated: "In fact Malaysian Malaysia would be another Singapore where no Malay who disagrees with the Chinese-dominated Government can be anything at all." See his "Pauper in Power", Opinion, 1, 6 (30 January-20 February, 1968), 71.





in order that it would be able to "survive" any longer, the moderate leadership of the UMNO must be "prepared to fall in with the wishes of the jingoistic majority."<sup>112</sup>

As early as 1965, in an undated letter to Dr. Toh Chin Chye (the then Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister) on the question of Singapore's secession, Tunku Abdul Rahman admitted that "there is absolutely no other way out" except separation. "If I were strong enough and able to exercise complete control of the situation", he said, "I might perhaps have delayed action, but I am not."<sup>113</sup> It is true that Dato' Syed Ja'afar Albar, who had led UMNO's "ultras" in their attack against Lee Kuan Yew, resigned as the Secretary-General of the UMNO after Singapore's departure, and Tuan Syed Nasir bin Ismail, the Director of the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (Language and Literary Agency), who had been an outspoken critic of Alliance's language policy, was silenced after the passage of the National Language Bill in 1967.<sup>114</sup> But this was mostly a holding action because most of the known "ultras" continued to be active within the UMNO after Singapore's eviction in August 1965.<sup>115</sup> At the time when Tunku Abdul Rahman began to write

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<sup>112</sup>Supra, 386, note 56.

<sup>113</sup>For full text, see The Straits Times, August 11, 1965, 1.

<sup>114</sup>It was believed among some Chinese community leaders that Tuan Syed Nasir was silenced in return for MCA's expulsion of Mr. Sim Now Yu, the President of the United Chinese School Teachers' Association.

<sup>115</sup>For example, in a 21-man Alliance Action Committee established after





his May 13: Before and After in June 1969, "Many of the honest members were taken in by the 'Ultras' and so coveted the prospect of going it alone without the MCA in the Cabinet."<sup>116</sup>

Judging from Tunku Abdul Rahman's book, one may very well assume that Dr. Mahathir bin Mohammed might not have been expelled from the UMNO's executive committee if he had not committed the mistake of widely distributing his personal letter to the Tunku in which he outlined the crimes that the Tunku had committed against the Malay race. Mahathir's letter provoked Malay students' demonstrations in the University of Malaya, the MARA Institute of Technology and the Muslim College in August 1969 demanding the resignation of the Tunku.<sup>117</sup> It is noteworthy that Tun Abdul Razak, the then Director of National Operations Council and the present Prime Minister, had never been a target of attack throughout the campaign of the so-called UMNO's "intellectuals" to oust the Tunku from the leadership, although Tun Abdul

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Singapore's secession to iron out mutual differences among the partners concerning the issues of education and language, the questions of second-class citizenship and Malay privileges, and the relationship of the three partners, at least four out of eight UMNO's members were known "ultras". The eight were: Senu bin Abdul Rahman, Tuan Syed Nasir bin Ismail, Mahathir bin Mohammed, Musa Hitam, Mohamed Khir Johari, Abdul Ghafar bin Baba, Dato' Harun bin Haji Idris, and Wan Abdul Kadir bin Ismail. See The Straits Times, September 2-3, 1965.

<sup>116</sup> May 13: Before and After, op. cit., 140.

<sup>117</sup> See May 13: Before and After, op. cit., 117-135; and Sin Chew Jit Pch, August 5 and 29, 1969, 9. Some Malay lecturers also distributed letters demanding Tunku's resignation.



Razak had been Tunku's right-hand man since the early 1950's.

### Conclusion

While the Alliance has been supposed to work on the principle of mutual accommodation and cooperation among the communities, it has, in actual fact, been reduced to something like a tool of the UMNO to assert its political supremacy. This development is not surprising if one understands that the country was originally conceived as being Malay and the ultimate goal of the UMNO is to build a Malay Malaysia through assimilation. The fact that the actual attempt at assimilation through education and a unilingual policy is incompatible with the principle of mutual accommodation on which the Alliance formula was to be based has, however, worked to undermine the foundation of the Alliance and has caused a gradual loss of non-Malay support and confidence. On the other hand, the policy of "accommodation in the short run and Malayization in the long run" has not pleased the Malay ra'ayat either. As mentioned elsewhere, the expectations of the Malay masses, who "still see the Chinese middlemen as their exploiters",<sup>118</sup> have increased more rapidly than the ability of this policy to satisfy them. The increasing exposure of the Malay community to the increased educational opportunities, rural development, urbanization, and Malayization in the language and cultural fields, tends initially not to quiet

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<sup>118</sup>Kassim Ahmad (Chairman of the PR), op. cit., 17.





communal sentiments but to intensify them.<sup>119</sup> For example, the number of Malay students in vocational colleges, universities, and primary and secondary schools has been increasing at a speed that tends to outstrip the capacity of the political system to accommodate them after their graduation.<sup>120</sup> Under such circumstances, it can be expected that in order to maintain its support base among the Malay masses, the UMNO would respond with a more aggressive cultural policy

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<sup>119</sup>This phenomenon is what some political researchers refer to as "development trap" or "modernization breakdown", meaning that social, economic and political changes in the transitional societies tend to increase and generate rather than diminish the scope and intensity of social conflicts. See, for example, Fred W. Riggs, "The Theory of Political Development" in James C. Charlesworth (ed.), Contemporary Political Analysis (New York: The Free Press, 1967), 342-349; S. N. Eisenstadt, "Breakdowns of Modernization", Economic Development and Cultural Change, 12 (July 1964), 345-367; Fred. R. von der Mehden, Politics of the Developing Nations, 2nd Edition (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), 28-48; M.I.T. Study Group, "The Transitional Process" in Claude E. Welch, Jr., (ed.), Political Modernization: A Reader in Comparative Political Change (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., Inc., 1967), 22-48; and supra, 27, note 50.

<sup>120</sup>The number of Malay students in the various Malay-medium institutions in 1968 was: 491,560 in primary schools, 128,625 in secondary schools and 1,189 in agricultural and technical colleges. The number of Malay students in universities for the same year was 1,268. See Monthly Statistical Bulletin of West Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur: Department of Statistics, August 1968), 200-201. In the last two years, these figures are believed to have increased at a greater speed than before. With the establishment of the Penang University and the National University, the opportunities for the Malays to seek higher education are increased. It was revealed in the Budget Expenditure of the Federal Government for 1970 that only 1 out of every 90 people who had applied to join the West Malaysia Government Services in 1969 was successful. The total number of applicants was 320,000 and only 3,500 obtained their appointments. See The Straits Times, May 9, 1970, 3. This shows the limited capacity of the government services to absorb Malay graduates.



of Malayization and a more aggressive economic policy of assisting the Malays to take part in industries and commerce. Both policies would not only satisfy Malay communal sentiments but would also widen the scope of employment for the Malays. The Malayization of the English-medium primary schools, for example, has provided many openings for Malay teachers.

On the other hand, it can also be expected that the positive response of the government to Malay demands for rapid Malayization and more protections in the economic fields would not be welcomed by the non-Malays. The aftermath of the racial violence in 1969 saw the intensification of Communist guerrilla activities in northern Malaya. Reports persist that having lost faith in the Malaysian government to maintain justice and to protect non-Malays' lives and properties, Chinese youths have joined the guerrillas. According to one report, the number of guerrilla forces has increased from 500 to about 1,500 well-trained, disciplined, uniformed men with a radio station to spread revolutionary war.<sup>121</sup> This is another expression of the long-standing Chinese tradition of pei pi shang Lian-Shan.<sup>122</sup> Now that the non-Malays have been constitutionally denied the right to articulate their dissatisfaction with the "racial bargain" and to seek change through constitutional means, a situation might be created in which the non-Malays would be-

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<sup>121</sup>David van Praagh's report in the Globe And Mail (Toronto), January 5, 1971, 8.

<sup>122</sup>See supra, 228, note 45.





come totally alienated from the political system and tend to resort to whatever means to which they might have access to correct a situation they consider as unjust.

The role of the Alliance in "the integrative revolution" in Malaysia has been overestimated by a number of observers.<sup>123</sup> In fact, the Alliance was, and still is, an elite arrangement. Little or no interaction has taken place among the members of the three different parties. The Malays support the Malay leaders of the Alliance, not because they are the leaders of this inter-communal coalition, but because they are the leaders of the UMNO, the spokesmen of the Malay community. The same can also be said about the supporters of the MCA and the MIC. Such an arrangement does not seem to encourage cross-communal identification. Moreover, the two-faced style of Alliance politics has deepened distrust and generated new fears among the members of the three communities. Meanwhile, while the non-Malays have constantly been urged to owe their loyalty to the country, the Malays

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<sup>123</sup> Howard Wriggins writes: "Certain overarching parties, such as the Alliance in Malaysia ... consciously contribute to the integrative function. These political parties contain a large number of diverse and often competing groups. It is within the party that differences are negotiated, conflicts are compromised, half loaves are bargained over and shared. On the whole, national integration is likely to find its most congenial atmosphere where there are such political institutions ...." See his "National Integration", in Myron Weiner (ed.), Modernization: The Dynamics of Growth (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1966), 189. The integrative role of the Alliance has been exaggerated in such an assessment. See also B. Maheswari, "Malaysia - The Politics in a Plural Society", Political Science Review (Jaipur), 3 (October 1964), 45-46.





have been encouraged to continue to regard the country as being Malay. Under the Alliance formula and the two-faced approach, a same policy could be interpreted in two different ways. For example, a policy might be formulated in the committee room to further the goal of Malayization but it could be rationalized to the non-Malays "in terms of blending all cultures into a Malaysian identity in an equalitarian multi-racial political order."<sup>124</sup> The official division of the population into the bumiputra and the non-bumiputra in 1965 has further split the country into two contending groups: the Malays versus the non-Malays. All this shows is that the Alliance has not only failed to develop a horizontal tie among the members of the three communities. It has also created new hindrances to the development of such a tie and the creation of a common vertical identification.

Political events in the aftermath of the May-13th riots seem to indicate that the UMNO has drifted to authoritarian rule as an answer to non-Malay and Malay dissatisfaction. With the establishment of goodwill committees up and down the country and the banning of free speech even among parliamentarians on all issues concerning the constitutional provisions on citizenship, the status of Malay as the national language, the special position of the Malays and the authority and status of the Malay rulers, a new ruling pattern based

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<sup>124</sup>Felix V. Gagliano, Jr., Political Input Functions in the Federation of Malaysia (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Illinois, 1967), 123.



on the idea of "guided democracy" seems to have emerged. Dr. Mahathir bin Mohammed wrote after the riots and before his expulsion from the UNO executive committee:

Despite broad hints that all sorts of democratic practices will never be allowed in Malaysia, the same people still blithely talk of a return to democracy. What democracy? Real, limited or guided? Why not call a spade a spade? Why not say bravely that the people of Malaysia are too immature for a workable democracy? Why not say that we need some form of authoritarian rule? We are doing that anyway and it looks as if we are going to do that for a very long time to come. ... The disadvantage of the democratic process is that it satisfies no one. Authoritarian rule can at least produce a stable strong government. It irks but it works. ... we must accept that there is not going to be a democracy in Malaysia; there never was and there never will be. ... 'Democracy' in the words of the Minister for Home Affairs 'is dead'.<sup>125</sup>

The practice of the National Operations Council and the curbing of free speech seem to indicate that Dr. Mahathir's view has not been entirely rejected.<sup>126</sup>

Although the framework of Alliance's rule is still outwardly maintained under the new government headed by Tun Abdul Razak, the

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<sup>125</sup> Dr. Mahathir bin Mahammed, "Crimes in Our Democracy", Opinion, 2, 6 (August 25, 1969), 270.

<sup>126</sup> Tun Abdul Razak and Dato' Dr. Ismail have restated in a number of occasions that democracy is not a workable concept in Malaysia. See, for example, The Straits Times, June 19, 1969; and F. L. Starnes, "One Year Later", Far Eastern Economic Review, May 21, 1970, 23-26.





status of the MCA and the MIC in this partnership is now reduced almost to a point of insignificance. The main function that the two non-Malay partners perform is, not to speak for their respective communities in the Alliance, but to help the UMNO to maintain a facade of multiracial rule.<sup>127</sup> In fact, in response to the announcement of MCA's withdrawal from participating in forming the new government, Tun Abdul Razak said on May 13, 1969, a few hours before the outbreak of racial violence:

This means that there will be no Chinese representation within the Government but the Government will go on. We told the electorate that if they did not vote MCA there will be no Chinese representatives in the Government. Now there will be none at all.<sup>128</sup>

This statement, which implied a certain satisfaction, was entirely different from Tunku Abdul Rahman's announcement in 1964 which indicated that the UMNO would stick by the MCA even if only five of its candidates were returned.<sup>129</sup> Recently, the Deputy Prime Minister, Dato' Dr. Ismail declared that it would be best for the UMNO to dissolve the

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<sup>127</sup>After the election results were known, Tan Siew Sin announced on May 13, 1969 that the MCA would not take part in government, admitting that it had been rejected by Chinese electorate. Many observers suspected that rather than be rejected, the MCA was simply given the chance to withdraw, thus maintaining face. See The Times (London), May 14, 1969, 8.

<sup>128</sup>The Straits Times, May 14, 1969, 1.

<sup>129</sup>The Malay Mail, April 24, 1964. See also K. J. Ratnam and R. S. Milne, The Malayan Parliamentary Election of 1964, op. cit., 147.



Alliance partnership if the MCA and the MIC continued to be "tak hidup tak mati" (literally, half-living and half-dying).<sup>130</sup> Reacting to this statement, Tan Siew Sin announced that the MCA was facing a difficult situation in which it was the target of Malay ultras and Chinese chauvinists' attack. But, he added, there would be a limit to MCA's tolerance.<sup>131</sup> Judging from this development, one can readily assume that the two non-Malay partners in the present Alliance government have only been tolerated rather than accepted.

A new pattern of Alliance government may emerge from the successful cooperation between the Sarawak United People's Party and Party Bumiputra. It can be speculated that like the SUPP in Sarawak, the GRM in West Malaysia might be acceptable to the UMNO as its partner in a new Alliance to replace the present one. Despite this possibility, it should be remembered that under the existing political framework, which is now unquestionable, any Alliance that might emerge is bound to be dominated by the UMNO and become a convenient channel for building up the legitimation of the Malay model of nation-building.

No doubt, political and military power is now concentrated in the hands of the Malay community. The non-Malays would have no

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<sup>130</sup> Sin Chew Jit Poh, January 18, 1971; and The Straits Times, January 18, 1971. See also supra, 378, note 43.

<sup>131</sup> Sin Chew Jit Poh, January 19, 1971; and supra, 378, note 44. The Secretary-General of the MCA, Mr. Kam Woon Wah, also declared that the MCA would withdraw from the Alliance if the UMNO was not willing to cooperate. Ibid..



immediate means to resist if the UMNO were to impose complete authoritarian rule on the country. But, in the long run, would Malay domination lead to the realization of the goal of Malayization? In other words, is the idea of a Malay Malaysia viable in the Malaysian environment? If not, is there an alternative to this solution?

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## CHAPTER VII

### THE PROBLEMS OF MALAYIZATION

As discussed in Chapter I, a political system is integrated to the extent that the individual political actors develop in the course of political interaction a pool of commonly accepted norms regarding not only political behavior but also the vertical identification of the individuals with the national community as a whole and their horizontal identification with their fellow political actors.<sup>1</sup> In Malaysia, the course of communal political interaction has not resulted in the emergence of such a pool of political consensus. Instead, all major political crises in the country have tended to perpetuate the existing communal differentiations and exclusiveness and to generate new fears and suspicions among the members of the major communities.

Although a pool of commonly accepted norms regarding individuals' vertical and horizontal identification and other political

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<sup>1</sup>Supra, 15-18.



fundamentals has not yet emerged in Malaysia, the Federation is commonly considered a Malay country by most of the Malays, because the political system was originally conceived and formulated with Malay political and cultural ascendancy as the national base. As a result, like Rome in the Roman Empire, the Malay community possesses a preponderant share of the political and coercive power and, both politically and culturally, constitutes the core-community of the Federation. As members of this core-community, the Malays view the Federation as an extension of their own community, strongly identify with it as their Tanah Ayer (Native Land), and seek to assimilate into their culture the non-Malays whom they tend to regard as aliens. To become a "Malaysian", a non-Malay is thus required to accept "without question much of the substance and nearly all the paraphernalia of a Malay political culture."<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the whole integrative effort in Malaysia is an assimilative effort, as it has been directed, not to the development of a pool of political consensus through the natural process of acculturation and accommodation among the member communities, but to the establishment and consolidation of the political sub-culture of the Malay community as the only legitimate model for nation-building.

#### Malayization and Assimilation

The ultimate aim of the present Malaysian "integrative" effort is to form a single nation of one language, one religion and one

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<sup>2</sup>Felix V. Gagliano, Jr., Political Input Functions in the Federation of Malaysia (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Illinois, 1967), 300.





culture based on Malay characteristics. This goal was well stated by Musa Hitam, the former UMNO Executive Secretary, who had been the Assistant Minister attached to the Deputy Prime Minister Office until 1970:

The building up of a multiracial society to form a single nation is dependent on three important factors: Firstly, all citizens must accept the national language as their own language. Secondly, they must accept the Malaysian constitution, recognize Islam as the official religion, respect the position of the Malay Rulers and the Malay special rights. Thirdly, they must accept Malay culture as their own culture.<sup>3</sup>

This statement indicates beyond all doubt that integration has been conceived by the Malay political elites as Malayization or assimilation to Malay culture and "Malaysian nationalism must be based on Malay nationalism."<sup>4</sup> Therefore, Mohammed Khir Johari, the present Minister of Commerce and Industry, pointed out in 1966,

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<sup>3</sup>See Bertia Harian, July 23, 1966 and Mingguan Malaysia, 28th Issue, August 1966. Musa Hitam, like Dr. Mahathir, was a young, active and important UMNO leader before he was demoted in early 1970. The points he raised in his "one-nation-one-culture" theory seem to have been embodied in the Rukunegara and the "sensitive-issue clauses" of the constitution.

<sup>4</sup>Speech of Senu bin Abdul Rahman, the head of the UMNO Youth Movement and the former Minister of Information and Broadcasting. See Utusan Melayu, July 30, 1966. He added that the world should "understand and recognize the historical fact that the Malay Peninsula (including Singapore) and also Sabah and Sarawak are parts of the Malay Archipelago, where the majority of its people are of the Malay race and where the language is Malay."



the future of Chinese domiciled in Malaysia would depend on how they would assimilate themselves into the indigenous people. ... If they succeed in doing this, then they will be recognized as bumiputra.<sup>5</sup>

As detailed in Chapter V, the ultimate aim of building a Malay Malaysia has been expressed in the constitution, in the symbols of the political system, and in the education and language policies of the Alliance government. Recently, this aim has been reaffirmed in the Rukunegara and by adding the "sensitive-issue clauses" to the constitution. The results of the 1969 elections and the subsequent racial riots did not seem to have changed the direction of the nation-building policy of the Alliance government. In fact, these incidents have helped the UMNO to make up its mind to put the question of nation-building beyond any challenge through constitutional means.

However, to conceive political integration as Malayization in the Malaysian environment is bound to meet with strong non-Malay resistance even if such an approach were to be backed up with coercive power. The Prime Minister of Singapore, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, stated in 1965:

I do not claim to speak for all the Chinese. But personally if anybody wants to turn me into something that I cannot be turned

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<sup>5</sup>See Malay Mail, April 2, 1966; The Sunday Times (Singapore), April 3, 1966; and Utusan Melayu, April 3, 1966.



into, I simply have to resist.  
What can I do? But I can be a  
Malaysian.<sup>6</sup>

The reasons for this lie in the fact that Malayization not only fails to take into account the communal structure of the Malaysian society but also lacks some of the most important power ingredients for its successful implementation.

Criticizing the slogan for the Malaysian National Language Month which read Bahasa Jiwa Bangsa (Language is the soul of a race), Lee Kuan Yew pointed out that

It is impossible for me to become a Malay. Read these population figures; they are taken from Annual Reports - the cold blooded truth. ... we have a look and say: My God, did we make a mistake? But looking at it again, we arrive at the irresistible conclusion: No, we did not make a mistake. The 39.4% claim Bahasa Jiwa Bangsa: then nearly 61% are out. Where do they belong?<sup>7</sup>

Lee's statement brings out an important fact, that is, the Malay community which claims to be the core community and the dominant model for non-Malay emulation in Malaysia is itself a minority. This situation has not changed since Singapore's departure in August 1965, as the combined population of the non-Malay communities still out-numbers

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<sup>6</sup> Lee Kuan Yew, The Battle for a Malaysian Malaysia (2) (Singapore: Ministry of Culture, 1965), 53.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 52.





that of the Malay.<sup>8</sup> In other words, in terms of numerical strength, there is no core community in Malaysia. Each of the major communal groups is numerically significant enough to resist Malayization. Ceylon is a good example. In that country, the Tamils constitute less than 15 percent of the total population but their resistance to Sinhalese domination has been persistent and has produced grave political consequences.<sup>9</sup> Unlike the Sinhalese who constitute a clear majority in Ceylon, the Malays in Malaysia do not possess a majority status. Consequently, it is hard to convince the non-Malays to accept the legitimacy of the Malay community as a core cultural unit in the Malaysian society. As one observer points out, "The belief that 4.5 million Malays can dominate 3.5 million Chinese and 1 million Indians forever and assimilate them culturally is an impossible dream."<sup>10</sup>

To understand the difficulties that Malayization may encounter, one should consider the numerical strength of each of the major communal groups in Malaysia along with the high level of its internal integration. As seen in Chapter II, each major community is an integrated whole with its own distinctive cultural qualities and

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<sup>8</sup>The population distribution in Malaysia is as follows: Malays 44%; Chinese 36%; Indians, Pakistanis and Ceylonese, 9.5%; Indigenous 8.5%; and Others 2%. Supra, 51.

<sup>9</sup>See W. Howard Wiggins, "Impediments to Unity in New Nations: the Case of Ceylon", American Political Science Review, 55, 2 (June 1961), 313-320.

<sup>10</sup>Gerald P. Dartford, "Crisis in Malaysia", Current History, 57, 340 (December 1969), 354, 367.



long-standing traditions and living habits. Although communal groups are widely dispersed throughout Malaysia, their residential pattern is communally divided. When people with common racial, cultural, religious and linguistic characteristics and following a similar occupational and grouping pattern and living habit are residentially separated from other cultural and racial compartments, they possess a high sense of horizontal identification with their fellow-racials and can readily be mobilized to erase any assimilating effects on their cultural values and traditions. As far as the Chinese and Indian communities are concerned, the willingness to assimilate is absent. This is particularly so in the case of the Chinese because Chinese culture and traditions are generally treasured by them as a priceless heritage. Moreover, each major communal group has its own media of communication and is culturally independent and self-sufficient. Under such circumstances, any attempt at Malayization requires the deculturization of the non-Malay communities before they can be completely absorbed into the Malay cultural pattern. As group identification and solidarity are strong and the willingness to assimilate is absent, deculturization is bound to stimulate communal consciousness, reinforce communal identification and generate alienation and conflict. Meanwhile, the concentration of the indigenous people in the Borneo states and the geographical discontinuity of these states to the main body of the political system do not facilitate Malayization but tend to

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produce regional particularism.

### The Integrating Powers of the Malay Model

One important factor required for a successful implementation of a policy of assimilative integration is the willingness of the minorities to lose their special identities. This willingness to assimilate to the dominant cultural pattern of the national majority may easily be induced if the dominant cultural model possesses great utilitarian and identitive powers. An assimilative model is said to have utilitarian power if it offers those who accept assimilation a better alternative for social mobility and acceptance, the possession of political and economic power, and a richer cultural life. In other words, when utilitarian power is high, a person will be better off all round if he accepts assimilation. Identitive power, on the other hand, is related to the symbolic aspects of the assimilative model and the charismatic appeal of those elites who command the assimilative process. The identitive power of an assimilative model is high if the cultural values, symbols, national rituals and other mechanisms held up for emulation have great emotional appeal to the objects of assimilation. Sometimes, the identitive power of an assimilative model is enhanced by the personality and charisma of the elites of the core-unit who initiate and direct the assimilative process. The exercise of both powers is usually not alienating because utilitarian

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power serves to build up and maintain the interest of the objects of assimilation in the dominant cultural model and in further integration into it, whereas identitive power helps to build up and maintain the legitimation of the assimilative model and of the assimilative efforts.<sup>11</sup> As far as the non-Malays are concerned, the utilitarian and identitive powers of the Malay cultural model are very limited.

Economically speaking, the Chinese and Indians see no immediate utilitarian values to accept Malay assimilation, because they are generally better off than the Malays. As the Malays cannot be expected to give up their special position guaranteed by the constitution, Malayization will, in no way, improve the economic position that the Chinese and Indians already possess.

The same argument can be put forward with respect to the political utility of Malayization from the non-Malay point of view. As the Malaysian population is officially divided into the bumiputra and the non-bumiputra, it means that all Malaysian citizens are equal but the Malays are more equal than others because they are the sons of the soil. As long as this distinction is maintained on the basis of the involuntary characteristics of the Malays, the Malayization of the non-Malays in the cultural sense will not make them bumiputra. In other

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<sup>11</sup> Both concepts of integrating power are adapted from Amitai Etzioni, Political Unification: A Comparative Study of Leaders and Forces (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1965), 37-40, which deals with political unification at the international level. They have been reinterpreted to suit the purpose of this study.



words, while the Malays demand that the non-Malays be Malayized, they refuse to accept them fully into their fold and as their equals.<sup>12</sup> Unlike the Chinese in Thailand, where assimilation to the Siamese way of life means complete social acceptance,<sup>13</sup> under the present constitutional arrangements and the actual unbalanced distribution of political and military power between the Malays and the non-Malays, it is highly unlikely that Malayization of the Chinese and the Indians will mean their full acceptance into the Malay community and enable them to become the Malays' equals in terms of political and military power. A good example is the result of the 1969 general elections. Although the Malay-dominated Alliance suffered only a reduced majority in the Dewan Ra'ayat (House of Representatives), the "UMNO behaved as if it had been defeated in the election."<sup>14</sup> Such a

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<sup>12</sup>The present Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak, pointed out in 1959 that the Malays did not demand that Malayan nationality be called "Melayu" when the constitution was formulated because of the fear that if "Melayu" was used as the name of Malayan nationality, "the sons of the soil would be confused with non-Malay citizens." He added, "confusion would also arise as to the constitutionally guaranteed Malay special position." Sin Chew Jit Poh, May 20, 1959, 5. Compare this statement with ANCJA-PUTERA's People's Constitution, supra, 261-263.

<sup>13</sup>See G. William Skinner, "Change and Persistence in Chinese Culture Overseas: A Comparison of Thailand and Java", Journal of the South Seas Society, 16, 1-2 (1960), 86-100; idem, Chinese Society in Thailand: An Analytical History (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1957); and The Siau-w Giap, "Religion and Overseas Chinese Assimilation in Southeast Asian Countries", Revue du Sud-Est Asiatique (Bruxelles), 2 (1965), 67-83.

<sup>14</sup>See Derek Davies, "Some of Our Best Friends ...", Far Eastern Economic Review, June 26, 1969, 701. See also T. G. McGee, "Down - But Not





reaction, which did much to provoke the anti-Chinese riots in Kuala Lumpur in May-July 1969,<sup>15</sup> indicates that the Malays have taken their political predominance for granted to such an extent that they can hardly tolerate any non-Malay challenge, even if such a challenge were articulated through the electoral process. The adding of the "sensitive-issue clauses" to the constitution in March 1971, which prohibit public questioning of those constitutional provisions guaranteeing Malay political supremacy, is another indication that the Malays are not prepared to tolerate any future challenge to their predominance.

It can, of course, be argued that such a Malay reaction arises because the Malays are not yet convinced that the non-Malays have already achieved sufficient assimilation to the Malay way of life. For example, Dato' Dr. Ismail, the present Deputy Prime Minister, argued that "the Malays would give up [their] special position when a united nation was a reality. ... But it is not for others to demand this, because it is a breach of the consensus under which Malaya came into being."<sup>16</sup> However, as long as the grant of equal political rights and

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Out", Far Eastern Economic Review, June 5, 1969, 566-568.

<sup>15</sup>For details, see sources listed in supra, 411, note 110.

<sup>16</sup>The Straits Times, July 7, 1969, 6. It is noteworthy that Dato' Dr. Ismail did not say that Malay special position would cease once parity was achieved. Instead, he said it would end only when "a united nation" was a reality.



status to the non-Malays is conceived as a recognition of, rather than an inducement to, assimilation, such an argument does not invalidate the observation that the utilitarian power of Malayization is not strong enough to attract non-Malay assimilation. An analogy which can illustrate this point is the case of adopting a son. It would be futile to expect the adopted son to develop a sentiment of attachment to the new parents and brothers and sisters if he is denied an equal status with other members of the adopting family. In other words, the parents cannot deny their love and protection to the adopted child while they are expecting him to assimilate to the family's way of life. In Malaysia, the non-Malays still have to be convinced that they will be accepted as "real nationals"<sup>17</sup> if they succeed in assimilating to the Malay community. The Malays have not given any assurance which indicates that the non-Malays can look forward to the eventual abolition of Malay special position. In view of the permanent nature of this special status, its unchallengeable character, and the fact that a system of special privileges is bound to create strong vested

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<sup>17</sup>As one writer points out, "An emigrant may legally ... acquire [citizenship] of the country where he has founded a new home. But [he or his children] must also assimilate its social outlook and its national traditions, and even if [they] succeed in this task, it is not yet sure whether they will be accepted by the national community as real nationals. ... Jews have been living in Germany for a very long time ... and most of them were completely assimilated. Nevertheless, the ... Nazi regime ... branded them as aliens." Frederick Hertz, Nationality in History and Politics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1944), 13-14.





interests which will perpetuate the system and resist its abolition, it is unlikely that such an assurance will be given in the foreseeable future.

The fact that Malayization possesses little utilitarian appeal can clearly be seen if one compares the Malay language with English. During the colonial era, an English education was a main requirement for access to professional skills, scientific knowledge, business success and social status, although it did not offer a non-Malay as good a prospect as it offered a Malay for the potential possession of political power. Right from 1816 when the British first started the Free School in Penang up to the present time, the vast majority of the student population in the English schools has come from the non-Malay communities. In today's Singapore, where the Chinese constitute three quarters of the total population, there have been more students attending English schools than Chinese schools and the student population in the English schools has increased noticeably in recent years at the expense of the Chinese schools.<sup>18</sup> In the urban centers in Malaysia, a sizable number of the non-Malay population speaks only English and follows a European way of life. For many of them, being able to speak English and follow a European way of life

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<sup>18</sup>The Straits Times of April 12, 1970 speculated that Chinese schools in Singapore might go out of existence within 30 years. This speculation was based on the fact that the number of students attending Chinese schools had decreased from 178,840 in 1968 to 177,870 in 1969 while those attending English schools had increased from 310,340 in 1968 to 323,400 in 1969. For a comment on this speculation, see Sin Chew Jit Poh, editorial, April 14, 1970, 2.



is a mark of modernity. All this has taken place not because the non-Malays have been forced to receive an English education but because such an education has great utilitarian appeal to them despite the fact that colonial education has been repudiated by some nationalists.

The Malay language, on the other hand, is almost devoid of such an appeal. This fact was indirectly admitted by the former Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, when he said that if the use of English "in the administration and in the commercial houses" was scrapped, "The Courts will have to be closed, the firms will be able to carry on but with difficulty."<sup>19</sup> If the whole utilitarian aspect of the Malay language were taken into account, the Tunku might have added that "the hospitals will have to be closed, university lectures will be able to carry on but with difficulty and students wishing to seek further studies abroad will be handicapped." The Malay language, however, does possess a special quality. It is easy to learn and has long been regarded as a lingua franca among the different communities. It is on this basis that the non-Malays have accepted Malay as the national language (bahasa kebangsaan). As a matter of fact, there is practically no opposition among the non-Malay communities to the establishment of the Malay language as a common means of communication

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<sup>19</sup>Tunku's speech in the Dewan Ra'ayat on March 2, 1967. See The National Language (Kuala Lumpur: Federal Department of Information, 1967), 10. English is still officially used in many important areas of government administration. See supra, 319, note 57.





by making it the national language of the country.<sup>20</sup> But the question whether or not the Malay language possesses utilitarian power immediately arises when the Malay elites demand that it be made not only bahasa kebangsaan but also Bahasa Malaysia and be accepted by the non-Malays as their own language. The reason for this is that while the acceptance of Malay by the non-Malays as a common tool of communication does not involve the loss of their own mother tongues, their acceptance of it as their own language does.<sup>21</sup> In order that the non-Malays can be induced to accept Malay as a substitute for their own languages, it should have either a high utilitarian or a high identitive appeal to them, or both. In terms of its practical utilities rather than its use as a lingua franca across communal lines, Malay is indeed a poor substitute for the mother tongues of the Chinese and

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<sup>20</sup>For example, the representatives of the Chinese Associations and Guilds of Malaysia said in their memorandum to the Malaysian Prime Minister in 1965 that "After Merdeka, Malay was declared the National Language and we publicly announced our support. Not only do we urge the pupils in Chinese schools to study the language, but we also encourage people in different trades to learn it in order to develop the language so that it can be used as a means of communication among the different races." See A Memorandum to the Prime Minister for A Rightful Place of the Chinese Language (Kuala Lumpur: Asia Press, 1965), 3. This fact was acknowledged by Tunku Abdul Rahman when he said: "what impressed me is that there has been no one ... who is opposed to Malay being made the national language of this country. ... My sense of elation and confidence reached its height when the Chinese accepted Malay as the National Language ... they accepted it without murmur." See The National Language, *op. cit.*, 1, 9.

<sup>21</sup>The editorial of the Tamil Nesan of September 27, 1965, wrote: "There is no difference of opinion among the people of Malaysia on accepting Malay as the national language. But they fear how it is going to affect the future of other languages. The Government should make Tamil and Chinese as compulsory subjects and thereby dispel this fear."





the Indians for, as pointed out by the former Prime Minister himself, it "has not reached the standard of the Chinese or Indian language, less still the English language."<sup>22</sup>

Language and culture have both utilitarian and identitive values. The utilitarian values of a language and culture are always "voluntary" in character in the sense that they can be acquired. But identitive values are different as they are usually "involuntary" in nature and cannot easily be acquired. For example, the slogan Bahasa Jiwa Bangsa (Language is the soul of the race) has little meaning to one who speaks the language as a second language and does not belong to the Bangsa (race). Some languages and cultures, however, do have certain symbolic attraction across cultural and communal lines. For example, like Greek in Europe and Chinese in Indo-China in former times, a language may have a cross-cultural appeal not because it has tremendous practical utilities but because it is a symbol of a learned status, civilization or modernity. In Malaysia, Malayization is handicapped by the fact that the Malay language and cultural values and symbols held up for non-Malay emulation are exclusively communally-oriented and lack not only utilitarian power but a cross-cultural attraction as well. Furthermore, the language and other cultural values of each of the major non-Malay communities are also equally communally-oriented and,

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<sup>22</sup>The National Language, op. cit., 9.



especially in the case of the Chinese, have tremendous identitive values to its own communal members.

As mentioned elsewhere in this study, the whole symbolic structure on the basis of which the "Malaysian" nation is to be built is entirely rooted in Malay-Muslim culture and has meaning and significance only to the Malay component of the society. For example, the Malay language, the Malay-Muslim religion, and Malay customs constitute the entire cultural identity of the Malays but they all have neither emotional nor practical appeal to most of the non-Malay half of the population.<sup>23</sup> Whereas loyalty to the Malay rulers (including the Yang di-Pertuan Agong) has always been, to use Tunku Abdul Rahman's words, "integral to [Malays'] whole way of life" and "a heritage which runs in Malay blood",<sup>24</sup> such a relationship is totally alien to most of the non-Muslim citizens. Moreover, a non-Malay cannot be expected to have assimilated fully to the Malay way of life and experience what the Malays have as regards the Malay language, the rulers and other Malay cultural values without being converted into a Malay-Muslim. All this indicates is that the attributes of a Malay identity are almost entirely involuntary because they cannot easily be acquired by the non-Malays. Unlike the process of Sinification in South China in the past millennium which

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<sup>23</sup>Supra, 101-118, note 71 at 105, and 310-333.

<sup>24</sup>Tunku Abdul Rahman, May 13: Before and After (Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Melayu Press Ltd., 1969), 152-153.





required no canons of ritual purity or conversion, and imposed no restrictions on intermarriage and social interactions, Malayization requires a non-Malay to masok (enter) the Malay-Muslim religion which is formally restrictive in laying down conditions for admission to the community of Allah's believers.

It should be pointed out, however, that the alienness of the Malay way of life to the non-Malays and the exclusivity of the Malay-Muslim culture are not the main factors accountable for non-Malay resistance to Malayization, although their absence may greatly facilitate assimilation. What is more important here is the fact that the non-Malays (particularly the Chinese) are not convinced that masok Melayu will not make them worse off culturally than they are now. This skepticism is deeply rooted in the subjective image of the non-Malays as regards the standard of Malay culture and the nature of the Malay race. One example is the fact that the Chinese, urban and rural alike, are prone to refer to the Malays as "pigs" (chu in Mandarin, ti in Hokkien, or babi in Malay) in their private conversations, meaning that the Malays are "stupid and lazy".<sup>25</sup> The quality of stupidity and laziness is in

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<sup>25</sup>It is interesting to note that the Malays also refer to the Chinese as babi but with different connotations. In this case, the term means that the Chinese are dirty, infidel, greedy, and wealthy (because pigs are always fat). More than a month after the May 13th riots in 1969, one foreign correspondent reported from Kuala Lumpur: "'We've finished with the pigs - now we're going to start on the goats'. This was the blood curdling slogan repeated by young Malays before racial violence flared up again in Kuala Lumpur on the night of June 28." Far Eastern Economic Review, July 10, 1969, 116. Here the Chinese were referred to by the Malays as "pigs" while the Indians, as "goats". Reporting



turn seen as inherent in the nature of the Malay race and culture.

The non-Malays also tend to support the view that Malay-Muslim practices and traditions are largely responsible for Malay cultural and economic backwardness and retardation.<sup>26</sup> Although there is no universally accepted criteria for judging whether the standard of one culture is higher than the other, the belief that the culture of the non-Malays is superior to that of the Malays is a long-standing stereotype accepted by many non-Malays.<sup>27</sup> While this indicates that the non-Malays cannot

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his research on a Malay village, Peter J. Wilson wrote: "no matter what the intentions or personality of any individual Chinese may be in any situation with a Malay, the latter will always proceed in the belief that the Chinese is an infidel - dirty, cunning and deceitful. Equally, it may be averred that the Chinese acts according to his stereotype of the Malay - lazy, naive, and incompetent." He added, "no matter how clean a Chinese may be, he is always ritually impure to the Malays" because of "the extreme penchant of the Chinese for pork." See his A Malay Village and Malaysia: Social Values and Rural Development (New Haven: Hraf Press, 1967), vi, 25. See also Alvin Rabushka, Ethnic Components of Political Integration in Two Malayan Cities (Ph.D. Dissertation, Washington University, 1968), 59-61, 69-142; Marvin L. Rogers, Political Involvement in a Rural Malay Community (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1968); and Gayl D. Ness, Bureaucracy and Rural Development in Malaysia (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 46.

<sup>26</sup> For a discussion of the relationship between Islam and Malay economic advancement, see B. K. Parkinson, "Non-Economic Factors in the Economic Retardation of the Rural Malays", Modern Asian Studies, 1, 1 (January 1967), 31-46; *idem*, "The Economic Retardation of the Malays", Modern Asian Studies, 2, 3 (July 1968), 267-272; and William Wilder, "Islam, Other Factors and Malay Backwardness: Comments on an Argument", Modern Asian Studies, 2, 2 (April 1968), 155-164.

<sup>27</sup> It is not uncommon in Malaysia to hear Malay leaders complaining that the importance of the national language has not been appreciated by the people of Malaysia. For example, Tuan Syed Nasir bin Ismail, the





easily be induced to accept Malayization which appears to them as "a retrogression to a less efficient order of things",<sup>28</sup> it also reinforces the Malay fear that they will be "the loser" if they allow themselves to be subject to the "alien" cultural pressures which suggest alternatives to their traditionally accepted patterns of behavior.<sup>29</sup> This fear, whether justified or not, partly explains why

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then Director of the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (Language and Literary Agency), expressed his disappointment that the Malay language was not held in esteem by the public. What was worse, he added, was the fact that the Malays themselves had also looked down upon their own language and had been skeptical of its value. See Nanyang Siang Pau, April 21, 1959. For a similar complaint, see the editorial of the Utusan Melayu, January 18, 1966.

<sup>28</sup> Dealing with Chinese attitude toward the Malay language and culture, Charles F. Gallagher wrote: "the Chinese, who have usually learned English tolerably well as a necessary prelude to their commercial pursuits, and who communicate with each other in that language as much as in their own ... dialects, view the Malay language with the same disdain as they do Malay culture; they hold it inferior to what they have and useless for any practical purpose in the future. ... while non-Malays have quite willingly agreed to discrete separation of the communities in terms of culture and religion, they are not likely to accept a forced integration based upon a language which represents to them a retrogression to a less efficient order of things. They are prepared to let the Malays have their Islam, their land, and their jobs, but they balk at being fenced in by their idiom. To most immigrant groups English has been the path to achievement and material success, and Malay menaces them not only with a reversal of this process but also gives rise to an uneasiness that language may be the opening wedge to other kinds of cultural assimilation - not on the basis of a jointly shared multiculturalism but of a one-sided kind." See his "Contemporary Islam: A Frontier of Communalism - Aspects of Islam in Malaysia", American Universities Field Staff Reports: Southeast Asia Series, 14, 10 (May 1966), 18.

<sup>29</sup> It is observed that the Malay "villager feels himself threatened and regards new culture patterns as part of that threat. ... Many villagers when discussing the future seem sure of only one thing. There





the Malays have been insisting that Malaysia is a Malay country and that the other communities accept a cultural homogeneity based on Malay characteristics.

The discussion of the utilitarian and identitive powers of Malayization is not complete without mentioning the fact that unlike some other developing countries, the output performance or the effectiveness of the Malaysian polity is relatively high. On the one hand, the economy of the country is comparatively well developed and the standard of living is higher than that of its neighbors apart from Singapore and Brunei. On the other, the civil servants are relatively efficient and the network of communications is generally well developed. As a whole, in terms of its extractive, regulative and distributive capabilities, the Malaysian political system compares favorably with most of the Southeast Asian countries. It is on this basis that R. S. Milne suggests that "Malaysia could hope, so to speak, to 'live' on her effectiveness until such time as national unity were created" because "effectiveness may be a substitute for 'legitimacy'".<sup>30</sup>

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will be many more changes, and the Malay will be the loser from them all." See M. G. Swift, Malay Peasant Society in Jelebu (New York: Humanities Press, Inc., 1965), 91.

<sup>30</sup> R. S. Milne, Government and Politics in Malaysia (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1967), 244-245. Milne's suggestion is based on S. M. Lipset's hypothesis regarding effectiveness and legitimacy. See Lipset's Political Man (New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1960), 77-83.



Undoubtedly, it was by virtue of the fact that the peninsula was a land of fortune that had attracted the immigration of the non-Malays to the country in the past. It was also due to the effectiveness of British administration and the prospect of a better living condition in Malaya that had transformed a transient immigrant population to a settled one. Today, however, the nature of the non-Malay communities has changed because more than 85 percent of the non-Malays are local-born and most of them regard themselves as belonging to the country as much as anyone else.<sup>31</sup> In other words, non-Malay attachment to Malaysia has already taken root and is now less dependent upon economic motivations than upon whether, as citizens of the country, their demands for access, equality and distribution will be satisfied. While a high level of output performance of the Malaysian government may minimize communal antagonism through the gradual elimination of the economic imbalance between the Malays and the non-Malays, it is still questionable whether or not, under the present political

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<sup>31</sup>In a letter to the editor of Opinion, "A Malaysian", apparently a Chinese, wrote, "I was born and bred here and my loyalty is to this country. I am a Malaysian first and last, although I may be referred to as 'others' or for that matter a 'non-bumiputra' or 'orang tumpangan'. But let no one say Malaysia is not also my land and my country or that I am not prepared to die so that other Malaysians can sleep in peace, even if the invaders of Malaysia were Chinese. I ask my fellow Malay Malaysians to accept us as Malaysians and also treat us as ones." Opinion, 1, 6 (30 January-20 February 1969), 77. The sentiment expressed in this letter is quite indicative of the current thought of the new generation of the non-Malays in Malaysia. It also shows that acceptance and equality are the main concern of the non-Malay citizens.





and constitutional arrangements, it will meet the non-Malay demands for participatory equality and full acceptance. The reason for this is that the responsiveness of the Malay-dominated government to these non-Malay demands is limited by the fact that ascriptive considerations, or bumiputraisim, predominate not only in its recruitment policy but also in its cultural and other distributive programs. Such a preoccupation is "an expression of the racial 'bargain' between Malays and non-Malays."<sup>32</sup>

The crux of the matter is then clear: as the Malaysian government is seeking to establish the legitimacy of Malay supremacy as embodied in the "bargain", it is handicapped by the "bargain" itself to give an adequate response to non-Malay demands for participatory equality, distribution and full acceptance, while such a response is essential in building up non-Malay confidence in, and the legitimacy of, Malay rule. The failure of the Malay-dominated government to give equal protection to all civilians irrespective of race in the first few days of racial riots in Malaysia's capital in May 1969 was a good indication of this difficulty of the government because of its commitment to the goal of Malay supremacy and Malayization. Thus, unless the responsiveness of

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<sup>32</sup>R. S. Milne, "Political Modernization in Malaysia", Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies, 7, 1 (March 1969), 15. Milne states that "in Malaysia there has not been a shift from ascription to achievement in every sector. The 'bargain' between ethnic elites demands the retention of ascriptive criteria in some spheres, although there is a general tendency to stress achievement in preference to ascription." Loc. cit... These "some spheres", however, are the crucial areas of communal controversies.



the Malaysian government to non-Malay demands is high, a high level of output performance can hardly be turned into a great utilitarian asset of Malayization.

However, the fact that the extractive, regulative and distributive capabilities of the Malaysian government are high is still significant in the process of nation-building because these capabilities can be converted into coercive power which "is often a prerequisite for the success or survival of a union."<sup>33</sup>

#### Coercive Power and Malayization

It is true that if a model of assimilation possesses great utilitarian power and strong cross-cultural appeal, the minorities can be induced or persuaded through an evolutionary process of social and political interactions to abandon the racial, cultural, and linguistic characteristics which distinguish them from the national majority which commands the assimilative process, and to become merged into the national community of the majority. But one cannot overlook the important part that force or the use of coercion can play in the process of assimilation or integration. As pointed out by Amitai Etzioni, "force is an essential element in the fabric of every fully integrated union" and "plays a critical integrating role in the history

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<sup>33</sup> Amitai Etzioni, op. cit., 73.



of many a union."<sup>34</sup> If utilitarian and identitive powers are not lacking, the presence of coercive power can hasten the process of assimilation. In the event that the other two integrating powers are absent, the use of force at critical moments can prevent the disintegration of a union so as to give it the necessary time to generate the other two integrating powers.

However, unlike utilitarian and identitive powers, the function of coercive power or force is also disruptive. In other words, its integrative effect is not cumulative. It becomes disruptive if it is frequently and extensively exercised. According to Etzioni, "There seems to be a level beyond which the use of force defeats its purpose by generating such widespread and intensive alienation that it makes further unification less rather than more likely."<sup>35</sup> This is particularly the case in a communal society where group solidarity and primordial attachments are strong while the utilitarian and identitive appeal of the assimilative model of the dominant community is weak.

Malaysia has "a relatively continuous heritage of racial conflict."<sup>36</sup> During the Japanese occupation, the resistance and coun-

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<sup>34</sup>Amitai Etzioni, op. cit., 72, 73.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 73.

<sup>36</sup>See Felix V. Gagliano, Communal Violence in Malaysia 1969: The Political Aftermath (Athens, Ohio: Southeast Asia Series No. 13, Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1970), 6.





ter-resistance movement had, in effect, become a sort of communal war to certain sections of the Malay and non-Malay communities.<sup>37</sup>

The first post-war pai-hua movement took place after Japanese defeat and before British return and produced far-reaching effects on Chinese-Malay relations.<sup>38</sup> The Communist armed revolt broke out in 1948, a few months after the proclamation of the Federation of Malaya, which was not ended until 1960. As the revolt was largely Chinese-led, it was seen by many Malays as a Chinese challenge to their homeland and "birthrights".<sup>39</sup> Other major racial clashes were the Maria Hertogh riots of 1950 in Singapore against Europeans and Chinese,<sup>40</sup> the Malay attack on the Chinese in Pangkor Island in May 1959,<sup>41</sup> the communal

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<sup>37</sup>Supra, 229-233.

<sup>38</sup>Supra, 230-231; and Kenelm O. L. Burridge, "Racial Relations in Johore", Australian Journal of Politics and History, 2 (May 1957), 151-168.

<sup>39</sup>Supra, 266-273.

<sup>40</sup>See C. Northcote Parkinson, "The Singapore Riots", The Fortnightly, 176 (September 1951), 590-596. The riots occurred when Singapore High Court annulled an Islamic marriage between a Malay and a Dutch teenager upon the request of the Dutch parents. The Dutch girl was raised in a Malay family during the Japanese occupation while her parents were away in Europe. The parents came back to claim the girl after the War.

<sup>41</sup>See Willard A. Hanna, "Regional Developments in Malaya, Part IV - Pangkor Island: A Footnote to Malayan Prospects and Problems", American Universities Field Staff Reports: Southeast Asia Series, 8, 14 (June 15, 1960), 1-8. The attack occurred after two young Malays were chastised by a Chinese father for the accosting of his two pretty daughters.



bloodshed at Bukit Mertajam in Penang and in Singapore during July and September of 1964,<sup>42</sup> the Penang riots in 1967,<sup>43</sup> and the notorious May 13th communal clashes in 1969.<sup>44</sup> One of the basic reasons for this frequent occurrence of racial violence is the fact that "There is a widespread preception of 'relative deprivation' in each of Malaysia's major ethnic communities."<sup>45</sup> As both the Malay and the non-Malays see inequalities and injustices in the society, their resentment and mutual distrust are the first step toward violent outburst.

In a society in which the sense of vertical identitification with the national community has not been unified and the horizontal attachment among the members of the different communities has not yet fully developed, the possibility of using force to settle political disputes is always present. In Malaysia, this possibility is enhanced by two additional factors. On the one hand, Malayization lacks both utilitarian and identitive powers for its peaceful realization. On the other, however, the actual and potential coercive power is highly concentrated in the hands of the Malay community which claims to be

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<sup>42</sup>See "Communal Tragedy", Far Eastern Economic Review, 45 (July 30, 1964); and Michael Leifer, "Communal Violence in Singapore", Asian Survey, 4, 10 (October 1964), 115-121.

<sup>43</sup>See Nancy L. Snider, "What Happened in Penang?", Asian Survey, 8, 12 (December 1968), 960-975; and supra, 408, note 107.

<sup>44</sup>For details, see sources listed in supra, 411, note 110.

<sup>45</sup>Felix V. Gagliano, Communal Violence ..., op. cit., 3.





the core-unit of the Malaysian society and in the hands of the political elites who command the Malayization process.

In terms of actual power, the Malay community has a preponderant control over such means for exercising coercion as the leadership roles in government at both the federal and state level, bureaucracy, the police and security forces, the army and the air force. The Internal Security Act, the Prevention of Crime Ordinance, the Restricted Residence Ordinance, and the Industrial Relations Act, which are sanctioned by the emergency provisions of the constitution, have given the federal government extensive security, emergency and other special powers affecting freedom of expression, assembly, association and movement, as well as freedom of the mass media. The Malay-dominated government is also vested with the power to deprive of their citizenship those non-Malays who have acquired their citizen status by registration or naturalization.<sup>46</sup> Now that Malay special position and other privileges are regarded as "binding arrangements between the various races" and "entrenched" in the constitution,<sup>47</sup> the questioning of which has been constitutionally prohibited, if a forced assimilation were needed, the Malays could very well claim that they were merely

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<sup>46</sup>For a discussion of some of these special powers and their implications in Malaysian political life, see H. E. Groves, "Constitutional Problems" in Wang Gungwu (ed.), Malaysia: A Survey (New York: Praeger, 1964), 356-364; and V. Veerappan, "State Security and Subversion", Opinion, 2, 4 (April-May 1969), 235-236.

<sup>47</sup>See The May 13 Tragedy: A Report (Kuala Lumpur: National Operations Council, 9 October, 1969), 85.



exercising their constitutional rights. Furthermore, the Malay community is highly cohesive in comparison with other communal groups. As the masses of the Malay ra'ayat have never been resocialized to accept the non-Malays as their equals and many of them still regard the non-Malays (the Chinese in particular) as alien intruders, their exploiters, and a threat to their culture, way of life and political supremacy, they can easily be led or mobilized by extreme communalists to support an Indonesian-type solution to the question of Malayization in Malaysia. Meanwhile, Indonesia, the country of the so-called Malays' "blood brothers", can become a potential source of Malay support in the event of a communal showdown in Malaysia.

About ten years ago, Rupert Emerson observed that the issue of nationhood in a "plural" society "can become one to be settled only through a trial by battle" and "must be translated in simple language to read: who rules whom?"<sup>48</sup> In view of the communal character of the Malaysian society and the concentration of political and military power in the hands of the Malays, one may very well ask: will the situation that Emerson has observed happen in Malaysia? Would such a battle in Malaysia settle the question of Malaysian nationhood?

Since power is a relationship and is always exercised by some-

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<sup>48</sup>Rupert Emerson, From Empire to Nation: The Rise to Self-Assertion of Asian and African Peoples (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), 329.



body on another person for the attainment of a given goal, one should consider not only the potential and actual power of the power-holders but also the potential response of the power-addressees when power is exercised on them. Moreover, the possession of coercive power does not mean that the power-holders will actually exercise it to achieve their goals, although its presence has a deterring effect on the power-addressees. Therefore, the extent of the power of the power-holders also depends in part on the intensity of their desires, their willingness to accept costs and risks to get what they want, and the potential retaliating power of the power-addressees. The continuous heritage of racial conflict in the country and the practice of the government to adopt a stern and repressive attitude toward non-Malay dissenters while tolerating Malay "ultras" to engage in their political activities seem to indicate that to a certain limit, the Malay masses and their leaders are prepared to resort to coercive measures.

The pattern that an assimilative or integrative process follows is partly determined by the kind of integrating power that the elites concerned command and exercise. As the kind of integrating power that the Malay elites in Malaysia command is coercive power, the temptation to use it to achieve their goals is presumably great. But in a communal society like Malaysia, it is also predictable that the use of coercion in the process of nation-building would be highly disruptive rather integrative. One reason for this is that "no race can claim to constitute

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a majority of the population. The non-Indians form the majority; the non-Chinese are in the majority; and the non-Malays also form the majority."<sup>49</sup> The use of force might temporarily settle the question "who rules whom", but the result would not be "a united nation" but chaos. In terms of numerical strength and economic power, the potential retaliating capabilities of the non-Malays are considerable. These were partly demonstrated in the May riots in 1969 and in a boycott of Malay products and enterprises after the riots.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the retaliating capabilities of the non-Malays also lie in the fact that the Chinese have a long tradition of pei pi shang Lian Shan (being forced to go up to Mountain Lian, i.e., rebellion) and are well-known for their organizational capacity. The secret societies and the Communist forces at the Siamese border could become the organized channels through which they could exercise retaliation. Residential segregation along communal lines could facilitate mobilization and lead to large-

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<sup>49</sup>Chen Man Hin, "Problems of a Multi-Racial Malaysian Society", The Rocket, 2, 10 (October 1967), 3. R. S. Milne also states that "Complete assimilation would be difficult, even if attempted by force. It might have been a possible policy if the proportion of Chinese had been smaller, and if Chinese culture had been less venerable and less admired." See his Government and Politics in Malaysia, op. cit., 236.

<sup>50</sup>After the riots, there was a tendency for Chinese and foreign capital to move out of Malaysia. In the few months following the riots, government leaders had issued a number of statements designed to allay the fear of Chinese businessmen and foreign investors. See the July-September issues (1969) of the Sin Chew Jit Poh. For a period of time, the non-Malays also refused to eat Malay durians, satay, and other fruits and food; to take Malay taxi; and to provide transportation for Malay agricultural products.



scale confrontation. The Chinese might also turn to Singapore and/or China, and the Indians to India, for support, while the Malays might look to Indonesia for military intervention. Malaysia would then be "caught in a South Vietnam situation",<sup>51</sup> or a Cyprus or Arab-Israeli position. Such a communal showdown might also result in the separation of East Malaysia from the West. Due to the geographical discontinuity of the Borneo states to the peninsula, the line of control might be too long for the federal government to keep them within its fold.<sup>52</sup> Meanwhile, most areas of Southeast Asia have been beset with political turmoil and are in a process of radical change. Communal clashes in Malaysia might very well create the condition for Communist uprising and the country might then be turned into another Cambodia.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Lee Kuan Yew, "A Malaysian Malaysia", Malaysian Mirror, 1, 13 (29 May 1965), 1.

<sup>52</sup>On this point, Lee Kuan Yew asked in 1965: "Can small groups of men hold together wide territories separated by a vast ocean? (Kuching is some 555 miles away; Tawau in North Borneo is 1,200 miles away). Has the Malaysian Navy or the Malayan Navy the capacity to keep these lines open without British, Australian and New Zealand support? Can they support such a communalist Malaysia?" Ibid., 5.

<sup>53</sup>In 1966, the London Times correspondent wrote: "If the external threat to Malaysia [Indonesian confrontation] were withdrawn the Malay extremists in the peninsula would probably strengthen their demand for an alliance with the Malays of Indonesia against the expatriate Chinese throughout the area. ... the Chinese ... would be unlikely to submit to Malay domination without struggle. Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, the Singapore Prime Minister, believes that the Chinese leadership in such a struggle would inevitably pass to the communists, creating a new and





It can thus be seen that if coercive power were frequently and extensively used to achieve the goal of Malayization, the outcome would be extremely disruptive and disastrous. But one may argue that if it were properly exercised at critical moments, it might be able to hold the communities together until such time as the utilitarian and identitive powers of Malayization were generated through the maintenance of a high level of output performance of the political system. However, such an outcome seems to be unlikely to obtain unless the present model of nation-building could be modified so as to increase its responsiveness to non-Malay demands for equality and full acceptance. Without this modification, the result would also be chaotic and disruptive in the long run because fear, alienation, resentment and antagonism could not serve as a basis of national unity in a communal society where the numerical strength of the two major communities is almost equal and each of them is apparently unwilling to be deculturized by, and become absorbed into, the other.

It should be pointed out, however, that mutual fear can be a starting point for mutual accommodation. Of course, deadlock is likely to occur in the Malaysian situation; but deadlock can be a solution to a dispute only when the outcome of the deadlock (often the status quo) seems tolerable to the disputing parties. In Malaysia,

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probably more serious Malayan Emergency of the type which engaged one hundred thousand primarily British troops for twelve years after the Second World War." See David Holden, "Answers East of Suez", The Sunday Times (London), January 9, 1966.



deadlock appears highly intolerable to both the Malays and the non-Malays because the sense of relative deprivation and communal insecurity is widespread and intense in each of the major communities. An alternative to deadlock is to use coercion to secure non-Malay compliance with the policy of Malayization. But as seen above, if such a solution were attempted, both the Malays and the non-Malays would stand to lose. In other words, both deadlock and coercion in the Malaysian situation seem unreasonable because both the Malays and the non-Malays would stand to gain if they could only agree to peaceful adjustment. Since Malayization does not offer the prospect of a possible success, why not try Malaysianization?

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PART IV

TOWARD A MALAYSIAN NATION





## CHAPTER VIII

### MALAYSIAN MALAYSIA: THE EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT

The concept of a Malaysian Malaysia is commonly believed to have originated in Lee Kuan Yew's involvement in Malaysian politics when Singapore was a part of the Federation of Malaysia in 1963-1965. But if the political history of Malaya is examined, one can find that the origin of the concept can be traced to Tan Cheng Lock.

As early as 1932, in a memorandum to Sir Samuel Wilson, the British Colonial Under-Secretary, who was investigating the issue of decentralization in Malaya at the time, Tan Cheng Lock wrote

The Government should aim at building a Malayan Community with a Malayan consciousness ..., to achieve which its policy ought to be Malaya for Malaysians and not for one section of it only.<sup>1</sup>

This call for a Malayan Malaya represented the non-Malay reaction to British pro-Malay policy and the decentralization scheme in the 1930's

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<sup>1</sup>See "Memorandum to Sir Samuel Wilson, December 1932" in Tan Cheng Lock, Malayan Problems from a Chinese Point of View (Singapore: Tannisco, 1947), 80.



which were designed to reinforce the Malay claim that Malaya was primarily a land of the Malay race and British administration should be directed to the preservation and consolidation of the Malay character of the peninsula. "During the time of the Clementi reforms and the visit of Sir Samuel Wilson", Rupert Emerson wrote in 1937,

the two opposing cries came more and more clearly to be 'Malaya for the Malays' and 'Malaya for the Malayans', the latter term being taken to include all the locally born and settled population of whatever race or creed.<sup>2</sup>

Although Tan Cheng Lock, Lim Ching Yan,<sup>3</sup> and other non-Malay spokesmen did not succeed in winning British support for their demands of full acceptance in a Malayan Malaya, it cannot be denied that major political problems and conflicts in pre-war Malaya had centered around the two opposing concepts of a future Malaya - a Malay Malaya or a Malayan Malaya.<sup>4</sup>

Malay supremacy had been encouraged by the Japanese during the Second World War but the idea of a Malayan Malaya in which every citizen had equal political rights regardless of his racial origin

<sup>2</sup>Rupert Emerson, Malaysia: A Study in Direct and Indirect Rule (New York: Macmillan Co., 1937), 513. This book was reissued by the University of Malaya Press, Kuala Lumpur, in 1964.

<sup>3</sup>For Lim Ching Yan's call for a Malayan Malaya, see supra, 176, note 60.

<sup>4</sup>Supra, 162-188.





was revived immediately after the Japanese surrender in 1945 when it was embodied in the British-sponsored Malayan Union scheme.<sup>5</sup> Later, the same idea was widely publicized by Tan Cheng Lock and his associates who led the All-Malayan Council of Joint Action (AMCJA) in its fight against the replacement of the Malayan Union scheme by the report of the Anglo-Malay constitutional working committee which sought to re-establish the pre-war political order of Malay supremacy.<sup>6</sup>

The 6-point proposals of the AMCJA for constitutional change in post-war Malaya<sup>7</sup> had gained considerable support from the active public of the non-Malay communities but they failed to leave any significant impact upon the subsequent Federation of Malaya Agreement of 1948, which was mainly the product of negotiations between the British on the one hand and the rulers and the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) on the other.<sup>8</sup> From Britain's point of view,

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<sup>5</sup>Supra, 238-244, 288-291.

<sup>6</sup>Supra, 245-266, 291-294.

<sup>7</sup>The six proposals were: (1) the creation of a United Malaya inclusive of Singapore; (2) responsible self-government based on universal suffrage; (3) equal citizenship rights for all who made Malaya their home and the object of their undivided loyalty; (4) the sultans should be reinstalled as the sovereign heads of the states; (5) matter touching the religion and custom of the Malays should be left entirely in the hands of the Malay community; and (6) the political, economic and educational standards of the Malays should be advanced. See supra, 258-266, and note 101 at 259.

<sup>8</sup>Supra, 250-251, 263-264, 266-268.



the demand of the AMCJA for immediate self-government was too radical to merit its serious consideration.<sup>9</sup> As the UMNO had tenaciously adhered to a "Malaya for the Malays" policy, AMCJA's demand of equal political rights for the non-Malays was met with strong opposition. In order to assure political stability and their political and economic control in post-war Malaya, the British were thus prepared to accede to the wishes of the UMNO at the expense of the idea of a Malayan Malaya. Furthermore, the leadership of the AMCJA and its ally, Pusat Tenaga Ra'ayat (PUTERA),<sup>10</sup> had been closely related to left-wing politics in the immediate post-war years. As a result, any political demands concerning the idea of a non-communal Malaya had often been branded as part of the Communist conspiracy and thus regarded as illegitimate. With the outbreak of the Communist revolt in June 1948, the AMCJA-PUTERA alliance began to disintegrate under the pressure of the Emergency and the concept of a Malayan Malaya was not publicly mentioned by any political groups until the middle of the 1950's.

Malaya gained its political independence from Britain in 1957 but the new political order in the country remained largely the same as that of 1948. The only significant change was the fact that more non-Malays had been admitted as citizens of the independent Federation. It is now claimed by the Malay political elites that the more

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<sup>9</sup>Supra, 254-258.

<sup>10</sup>Supra, 260-261.



liberal grant of citizenship to the non-Malays in 1957 was agreed to by the Malay community in return for non-Malays' acceptance of Malaya as being a Malay country.<sup>11</sup> It was based on this alleged assumption that the former Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, had restated on a number of occasions that "this nation had been accepted by all the other races living here as being fundamentally a Malay country."<sup>12</sup>

In view of the fact that the 1957 constitution was essentially a modified version of the 1948 Agreement and the whole process of constitution-making was, to a large extent, dominated by the Alliance, especially the UMNO and the Malay rulers, the claim that the terms of 1957 have established a political consensus among the various races seems to have a dubious validity.<sup>13</sup> On the one hand, political demands articulated by the Pan-Malayan Federation of Chinese Associations and Guilds which represented 1,094 Chinese organizations with a total membership of 2 million Chinese across the country and was far more representative of Chinese community than the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA),<sup>14</sup> were rejected by the Alliance as an expression of "Chinese chauvinism". As the 1957 citizenship provisions

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<sup>11</sup>Supra, 333-337.

<sup>12</sup>Tunku Abdul Rahman, May 13: Before and After (Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Melayu Press Ltd., 1969), 147. Supra, 120, 380-383, 390-393.

<sup>13</sup>Supra, 337-346.

<sup>14</sup>Supra, 343-345.





still retained the fundamental distinction between the Malay and the non-Malay citizens, they were rejected by the Pan-Malayan Federation of Chinese Associations and Guilds. Instead, this Federation adopted a Malayan-Malaya program and asked for citizenship by birth (jus soli), equal rights for all citizens, a multilingual legislature and a five-year residential qualification for citizenship by naturalization.<sup>15</sup> But these requests came to nothing in the final draft of the 1957 constitution. Despite their failure to influence the outcome of the constitutional negotiations in 1957, it cannot be denied that these Chinese Associations and Guilds had rejected the idea of a Malay Malaya.

On the other hand, it was seen earlier in this study that the Alliance had been dominated by the UMNO and the MCA and the MIC's role in formulating important policies had been minor. Tan Siew Sin wrote in 1956:

the Malays, with their over-whelming voting strength want their 'special rights' written into the Constitution. Some of them are not satisfied with their present plums, i.e., the majority of posts, and the best of them too, in the public services; they want to extend this highly discriminatory form of legislation into industry and commerce. 'Warta Negara' [a Malay paper] talks about the necessity for making the Malays the 'master race' of Malaya. This presumably means that non-Malays are to be reduced to the status of hewers of wood and drawers of water. Shades of Hitler!

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<sup>15</sup>Supra, 344.



Others want Malaya to join up with Indonesia. I myself have heard this from the lips of one or two UMNO officials.<sup>16</sup>

Since "the over-whelming majority" of UMNO's "following" was "jingoistic", Tan Siew Sin said, "we [the MCA] have to yield because we are weaker even though we are in the right"<sup>17</sup> as regards the 1956 constitutional proposals.

Finally, throughout the process of constitution-making in 1956-1957, Alliance leaders had repeatedly emphasized that the aim of Merdeka (independence) was supreme, that all races should forget their differences and be united to achieve this supreme goal, that the non-Malays should refrain from making any demands which would slow down the process of attaining independence, and that all outstanding issues could be left to be dealt with after Merdeka.<sup>18</sup> It was against this

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<sup>16</sup> Tan Siew Sin's letter to Dr. Lim Chong Eu dated 27th September, 1956. See "Appendix B" in Lee Kuan Yew, The Battle for a Malaysian Malaysia (2) (Singapore: Ministry of Culture, 1965), 58.

<sup>17</sup> Tan Siew Sin's letter to Dr. Lim Chong Eu dated 8th September, 1956. See "Appendix A" in Lee Kuan Yew, ibid., 57; and "Appendix B" in Lee Kuan Yew, ibid., 61. See also supra, 341-342, 385-388.

<sup>18</sup> Non-Malay restraint is now being interpreted as an expression of consent; but this interpretation can hardly be accepted by the non-Malays. For example, the representatives of the Chinese Associations and Guilds wrote in 1965: "In the first Federal Elections, before Merdeka ... the parties concerned came to a temporary mutual understanding. The United Chinese School Teachers' Association and the Chinese School Managers' Association would not temporarily mention the question of official language to facilitate the Alliance in the





political atmosphere that the terms of 1957 which included the acceptance of the 1948 framework of a Malay Malaya had been formulated.

The Federation of Malaysia was established in September 1963 in the form of admitting three new territorial units - Singapore, Sarawak and Sabah - into the established political order of the old Federation of Malaya.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, Malay supremacy was not affected

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Elections. But they did not mean it to be exchanged for citizenship; nor did they mean that the language problem was solved and the Chinese would stop mentioning it." See Protem Working Committee of Representatives of Chinese Associations and Guilds of Malaysia, Memorandum to the Prime Minister for a Rightful Place of the Chinese Language (Kuala Lumpur: Asia Press, 1965), 2. With regard to the constitutional proposal put forward by the Alliance in 1956, the Indian Daily Mail commented that the views of the Alliance were merely the prevalence of the wishes of UMNO over the other parties. See the editorial of the Indian Daily Mail, September 19, 1956.

<sup>19</sup>For some accounts on the formation of Malaysia and its problems, see Lord Cobbold, "Sarawak and North Borneo in Greater Malaysia", Commonwealth Journal, 5 (November-December 1962), 291-297; Emily Sadka, "Singapore and the Federation: Problems of Merger", Asian Survey, 1, 8 (August 1961), 17-25; Gerald P. Dartford, "Plan for Malaysian Federation", Current History, 43, 255 (November 1962), 278-282; Victor Purcell, "A 'Greater Malaysia'?", Race, 4, 1 (November 1962), 49-62; R. S. Milne, "Malaysia: A New Federation in the Making", Asian Survey, 3, 2 (February 1963), 76-82; *idem*, "Federation of Malaysia", Military Review, 43, 11 (November 1963), 3-10; Gordon P. Means, "Malaysia: A New Federation in Southeast Asia", Pacific Affairs, 36, 2 (Summer 1963), 138-159; Robert O. Tilman, "Malaysia: The Problems of Federation", Western Political Quarterly, 16, 4 (December 1963), 897-911; V. Singh, "The Struggle for Malaysia", International Studies, 5, 3 (January 1964), 211-239; F. J. Starnes, "Malaysia and the North Borneo Territories", Asian Survey, 3, 11 (November 1963), 519-534; Milton E. Osborne, Singapore and Malaysia (Ithaca: Data Paper No. 53, Southeast Asia Program, Department of Asian Studies, Cornell University, 1964); T. E. Smith, The Background to Malaysia (London: Oxford University press, 1963); and Willard A. Hanna, The Formation of Malaysia (New York: American Universities Field Staff, 1964). For some



with the birth of the new Federation. But the two years (1963-1965) during which Singapore was a member of the new Federation saw the rapid revival and growth of the idea of a Malaysian Malaysia. In 1965, non-Malay demand for a non-communal Malaysia became so widespread that it was seen by the Malays as a serious challenge to the terms of 1957.<sup>20</sup> This development stimulated the rapid growth of the counter forces for a Malay Malaysia within the Malay community, leading to the eventual eviction of Singapore from the Federation on August 9, 1965 to redress the balance of forces.

The Federation of Malaysia was first formed as a measure to act against the possibility that Singapore might become the Cuba of Asia.<sup>21</sup> Tunku Abdul Rahman, the Prime Minister of Malaya at that time, declared in 1962 that

It is impossible to grant independence to Singapore because of the danger of its going communist, and

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discussions on the legal and constitutional aspects of Malaysia, see L. C. Green, "Malaya/Singapore/Malaysia: Comments on State Competence, Succession and Continuity", Canadian Yearbook of International Law, 4 (1966), 3-42; H. E. Groves, "The Constitution of Malaysia: The Malaysia Act", Malaya Law Review, 5, 2 (December 1963), 145-163; L. A. Sheridan, "Constitutional Problems of Malaysia", International and Comparative Law Quarterly, 13, 4 (October 1964), 1349-1367; and Ibrahim Ahmad bin Mohamed, The Position of Singapore in Malaysia (Singapore: Malaya Law Review, 1964).

<sup>20</sup> See J. N. Parmer, "Malaysia 1965: Challenging the Terms of 1957", Asian Survey, 6, 2 (February 1966), 111-118.

<sup>21</sup> Lee Kuan Yew gave 12 broadcast talks in 1961 to expose Communist attitudes in Singapore and to justify his government's determination to join the new Federation. See his The Battle for Merger (Singapore: Ministry of Culture, 1962).





if it goes communist it would with the help of the communist powers try to overrun the whole of Malaya. ... Therefore, to prevent this unhappy and disastrous state of affairs occurring, the only course open to us would be to accept Singapore as a member of the Federation of Malaysia.<sup>22</sup>

Despite this common concern of the political elites of both areas, the Malay leaders in Malaya openly admitted that Singapore could not be brought into the new Federation unless the large Chinese population could be offset by the simultaneous absorption of at least an equal number of Malays and other indigenous peoples from Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei. The final solution was to include the Borneo states in the new Federation while Brunei decided to stay out after an internal armed rebellion.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Speech printed in Malayan Times, September 25, 1962; as quoted in Gordon P. Means, op. cit., 139.

<sup>23</sup>The argument that the addition of the indigenous inhabitants of the two Borneo states would "balance" the Singapore Chinese majority should not be overstated because the majority of these indigenous peoples were neither Malays, nor Muslims. See supra, 58-59, 61, 63. But what was significant was that "the Malays in Malaya looked upon the indigenous races as being their 'brothers', and hoped that they could be persuaded to support Malaysia, and also the Alliance Party". See R. S. Milne, Government and Politics in Malaysia (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1967), 63. Malay confidence on winning the support of the indigenous peoples was also based on communal considerations. For example, the Cobbold Report wrote, "In the absence of some project like Malaysia, the Chinese, with their rapidly increasing population and their long start over other races in education, could expect, when independence came, to be in an unassailable position in Sarawak .... The Malaysia proposals would interfere with this development." Federation of Malaya, Report of the Commission of Enquiry,





The Federation of Malaysia was thus established on the assumption that Malay supremacy in the peninsula would not be upset. As a matter of fact, several measures had been written into the Malaysia Agreement in order to ensure that this would not happen. The most important of these were the inclusion of Sabah and Sarawak to balance the large number of Chinese in Singapore, the limited number of seats in the federal parliament allocated to Singapore,<sup>24</sup> the restriction of Singapore's citizens in their involvement in federal politics,<sup>25</sup> and a number of other provisions relating to internal migration to prevent Singapore's citizens from moving to the Borneo states. These arrangements were intended, as pointed out by R. S. Milne, to "insulate" Malaya politically from Singapore<sup>26</sup> and to ensure that the political dominance of the Malay community in the country would not be adversely affected in the future. Lee Kuan Yew, the

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North Borneo and Sarawak (Kuala Lumpur: Government Press, 1962), 8.

<sup>24</sup>The average number of people represented by each member of parliament in the various territories was as follows: Malaya, 70,923; Singapore, 115,533; Sabah, 29,087; and Sarawak, 32,037. Singapore, with a population of 1.6 millions, was given only 15 seats in the federal legislature, whereas the two Borneo states, with a combined population of 1.2 millions, have 40 seats between them (Sabah 16, and Sarawak 24). For a discussion on this, see John C. H. Oh, "Diversity and Political Integration in Malaysia", International Review of History and Political Science, 5, 2 (May 1968), 58.

<sup>25</sup>Singapore's citizens were not permitted to vote or run as candidates in elections held outside Singapore.

<sup>26</sup>R. S. Milne, "Singapore's Exit from Malaysia: The Consequences of Ambiguity", Asian Survey, 6, 3 (March 1966), 175-184.



Prime Minister of Singapore, had acquiesced in these arrangements when the new Federation was formed.<sup>27</sup>

One of the most important reasons for Lee Kuan Yew's firm and enthusiastic commitment to the Malaysia scheme was his desire to restore the political fortunes of his People's Action Party (PAP) in Singapore which had been undermined by major defections from its left-wing.<sup>28</sup> For this reason, Lee did not hesitate to use his role in the Malaysia negotiations as a political weapon to strengthen his position in Singapore and, at the same time, to win for him a favorable image among the non-Malays in Malaya as a spokesman of their interests. The masterly performance that he had put up at the final stage of negotiations on Singapore's financial terms of entry into Malaysia was one example in which he was trying to demonstrate to the Singapore electorate that the PAP had effectively defended their interests and that unlike the MCA and the MIC, the PAP was always prepared to defend the interests of the non-Malays. Although he had been careful in his approach, what he had done was bitterly resented by the Alliance leaders, especially those of the MCA. Tan Siew Sin, the Finance Minister

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<sup>27</sup>See Nancy McHenry Fletcher, The Separation of Singapore from Malaysia (Ithaca: Data Paper No. 73, Southeast Asia Program, Department of Asian Studies, Cornell University, 1969), 26-31; and J. N. Parmer, op. cit., 112.

<sup>28</sup>See Michael Leifer, "Politics in Singapore: The First Term of the People's Action Party 1959-1963", Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies, 2, 2 (May 1964), 102-119; and idem, "Singapore in Malaysia: The Politics of Federation", Journal of Southeast Asian History, 6, 2 (September 1965), 54-70.





of the federal government, came into direct conflict with his Singapore counterpart during the negotiations. All this had planted the seed of bitter relations between Kuala Lumpur and Singapore in the subsequent years.

The PAP regained its lost political ground in Singapore in the elections held a few days after the formation of Malaysia in September 1963, having captured 37 out of a total of 51 seats in the state legislature. While this victory had greatly strengthened Lee's political position in his home state, relations between Singapore and Kuala Lumpur were not improved. The Singapore Alliance, fully backed by the ruling Alliance in Malaya, suffered a humiliating defeat in the elections. UMNO's candidates in the three predominantly Malay constituencies which had been regarded as the strongholds of the Singapore branch of the UMNO were defeated by PAP's Malay candidates. "The election result", Michael Leifer observed, "served only to confirm suspicions that the Singapore Prime Minister was out to capture eventually the Federal Government of Malaysia."<sup>29</sup>

The new situation was also complicated by the complete termination of diplomatic and economic relations between Malaysia and Indonesia. The entrepot economy of Singapore was seriously hit. While there was no sign that Indonesian confrontation would end in the imme-

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<sup>29</sup>"Singapore in Malaysia: The Politics of Federation", op. cit., 59.



diate future, Lee Kuan Yew and his colleagues might have felt that the early realization of the common market plan embodied in the Malaysia Agreement would be vital to Singapore's economy and that the established political order of Malay supremacy in Malaysia should be adjusted so as to prevent the Socialist Front and other anti-Malaysia forces from exploiting the growing dissatisfaction of the non-Malay communities. As the political strength of the PAP in Singapore was re-established and consolidated after the September elections in 1963,<sup>30</sup> Lee Kuan Yew set out to expand his party's influence in the peninsula.

Despite the fact that Lee Kuan Yew was reported to have committed himself to keep the PAP out of Malayan politics,<sup>31</sup> Dr. Toh Chin Chye, the Chairman of the PAP and Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore, announced on March 1, 1964 that his party would contest a small number of seats in the Malayan state and federal elections in the following month. This decision began the first stage of PAP's campaign "to assist in the building of a united democratic and socialist Malaysia, based on the principles of social justice and non-communalism". The immediate objective of the decision was "to ensure

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<sup>30</sup>The rapid recovery of PAP's political strength could be attributed not only to Lee's political skill in handling Singapore's relations with Kuala Lumpur and his attack on MCA's leadership, but also to a number of police operations which resulted in the detention of many anti-Malaysia leftist political activists in Singapore both before and after the formation of Malaysia.

<sup>31</sup>The Straits Times, September 10, 1963, and November 27, 1963.



that the Socialist Front does not benefit from the substantial protest votes against the M.C.A.." <sup>32</sup>

Throughout its 1964 election campaign, the PAP made it clear that its participation in the contest was not calculated to oppose the UMNO or its leadership, but to demonstrate to the UMNO that the PAP would be the more efficient partner if it could replace the MCA whose leaders were, in PAP's words, "the decadent political opportunists who had relied on politics to become rich." <sup>33</sup> According to Lee Kuan Yew,

The UMNO has got the support of the rural Malay masses and the PAP has an effective and wise policy to counter-attack communist sabotage in the cities and towns. A government with a combination of these two good qualities is the best answer to the communist challenge. It is the best way to maintain peace and security, to accelerate economic and political development and to raise the living standards of the people. <sup>34</sup>

Therefore, Lee observed, "A vote for the MCA is a vote for continued inactivity, complacency, and decadence. To bring about ... change, there must be a jolt on the leadership of the Government. That jolt

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<sup>32</sup> People's Action Party, Election Manifesto of the P.A.P. (Singapore: PAP Political Bureau, 1964), 4.

<sup>33</sup> Sin Chew Jit Poh, March 23, 1964, 9.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., April 6, 1964, 10.





can come about by voting for the PAP."<sup>35</sup>

Despite PAP's friendly attitude toward the UMNO, Lee Kuan Yew's bid to replace the MCA was rejected by the UMNO. Tunku Abdul Rahman declared

The PAP wants to teach us what is good for us. We know what is good for us, and what is bad. What the PAP really wants is to displace the MCA. They say they want to join the UMNO, but we don't want them.<sup>36</sup>

As a matter of fact, PAP's participation in the elections was regarded by the Tunku as a breach of the understanding that the PAP should confine its activities to Singapore. In Tunku's words, "Singapore's attempt to have a hand in the affairs of Malaysia ... in the last elections ... was quite contrary to what we agreed."<sup>37</sup> As a result, through its involvement in the 1964 elections, the PAP had antagonized not only the MCA but also the Malay leadership of the Alliance. The "ultras" in the UMNO accused the PAP of being anti-Malay and warned its leaders "to stop being aggressive to the Malays and instigating them; otherwise the Malays would abandon democracy and use fists to teach the PAP the

<sup>35</sup>The Straits Times, April 20, 1964.

<sup>36</sup>The Sunday Times (Singapore), March 15, 1964. The Tunku also announced that the UMNO would stick by the MCA even if only 5 of its candidates were returned. See The Malay Mail, April 24, 1964. For a detailed account of PAP's campaign, see K. J. Ratnam and R. S. Milne, The Malayan Parliamentary Elections of 1964 (Singapore: University of Malaya Press, 1967), 110-198.

<sup>37</sup>The Straits Times, September 21, 1964.



meaning of democracy."<sup>38</sup>

The PAP won only one out of a total of eleven parliamentary seats it had contested, while its fifteen candidates for state seats were all defeated. This failure was attributed by PAP's leaders to "the sense of national solidarity in defence of Malaysia under the threat from Indonesia ...."<sup>39</sup> While this was partly true because many non-Malays feared the prospect of a Malaysia dominated by Indonesia, the main reasons for PAP's failure were to be found in its open commitment to the support of the Alliance formula and the UMNO leadership. Non-Malay protest was not directed against the non-Malay partners of the Alliance alone. It was also directed against the UMNO, the dominant component of the partnership. In fact, Malay domination was the major target of non-Malay resentment. Because of this, the PAP campaign of support-opposition to the Alliance served only to confuse the voters. It was only after the elections that the PAP began to realize that if it were to become a significant force for change in Malaysia, it would have to reject Malay supremacy and the Alliance formula altogether.

PAP's bid to replace the MCA as a member of the ruling party was rejected by the UMNO for a number of reasons. First, the MCA was

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<sup>38</sup>Sin Chew Jit Poh, April 4, 1964.

<sup>39</sup>People's Action Party, Our First Ten Years: P.A.P. 10th Anniversary Souvenir (Singapore: P.A.P. Central Editorial Board, 1964), 111.





not only a long-standing but a reliable and tractable partner in the Alliance. Its leaders had proved to be cooperative and amenable to UMNO's pressure and demands. On the other hand, while the political skill and dynamism of PAP's leadership were widely acknowledged, its political reliability had yet to be proved. There was, therefore, no pressing reason for the UMNO to dissociate itself from a reliable MCA in favor of a PAP whose leaders were believed to have a history of treachery toward their political friends.<sup>40</sup> Second, as pointed out by an MCA Seminar paper,

Unless the PAP toes the line of [sic] which the MCA is doing at the moment, the PAP can never dream to come into the fold of the Alliance and if the PAP adopts the principle which we in the MCA is [sic] practising at the moment, is there any anxiety for the Chinese to elect and support the PAP to replace the MCA?<sup>41</sup>

Finally, Lee Kuan Yew seemed to have placed his hope for a share of federal power on the Western-educated leadership of the UMNO which, in his view, could probably be persuaded to accept his dynamic approach

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<sup>40</sup>For example, the head of MCA's Youth Section declared in a press statement: "Lee Kuan Yew's political power has always been built over the dead bodies of his friends and allies. With his present pro-UMNO and anti-MCA policy he hopes to isolate the Alliance and weaken the anti-invasion, anti-Sukarno, anti-Aidit and anti-infiltration forces of the Alliance party. .. Lee Kuan Yew's hop-step-and-jump political line ... is only a means of capturing political power to satisfy his power-mad intentions." Sin Chew Jit Poh, March 19, 1964, 9.

<sup>41</sup>A paper presented to an MCA Seminar of Secretaries and Publicity Officers held in March 1964. As quoted in Michael Leifer, "Singapore in Malaysia ...", op. cit., 58, note 6.



to the communal problems in Malaysia. However, Lee had miscalculated on this count. It took him less than one year to discover that the forces for a Malay Malaysia had already been well established within the UMNO and that his expectation for change by working with the UMNO within the framework of the Alliance formula was in fact unattainable.

Rejected by the UMNO, the PAP was compelled to "stay out in Opposition", which began the second stage of Lee Kuan Yew's efforts to help the Alliance "to put things right."<sup>42</sup> Through its assumed role of loyal opposition, the PAP became increasingly critical and vocal about Alliance's economic and cultural policies, charging that the Alliance government had failed to improve the economic conditions of the Malay masses in the rural areas. In retaliation, the Secretary-General of the UMNO, Dato' Syed Ja'afar Albar, and other "ultras" set out to organize the Malays in Singapore behind a campaign for special privileges, despite the fact that the Malaysia Agreement specifically stated that the special position enjoyed by the Malays in Malaya should not be extended to Singapore. A Singapore Malay National Action Committee was formed in July 1964 and propaganda leaflets were circulated in Singapore claiming that the Chinese there were planning to kill the Malays and concluding that "Before Malay blood flows in Singapore, it is best to flood the state with Chinese blood."<sup>43</sup> This campaign re-

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<sup>42</sup> Lee Kuan Yew declared that "For us to stay out in Opposition, sniping at the Government and exposing their follies without helping to put things right would be to court disaster for the country." The Straits Times, April 22, 1964.

<sup>43</sup> As quoted in Michael Leifer, "Singapore in Malaysia ...", op. cit.,



sulted in the racial clashes between the Malays and the Chinese in Singapore in July and September 1964. Late in September, Lee Kuan Yew and Tunku Abdul Rahman reached an agreement to avoid political discussions of all "sensitive issues" and to stop PAP's activities in the branches already established in Malaya.<sup>44</sup> But the truce was short-lived and by late October, political exchanges between Kuala Lumpur and Singapore were resumed.

As seen earlier in this study, the Alliance had been prone to use threats of racial violence to silence its challengers. Unfortunately, these tactics were carried to their extreme in 1964 and led to the actual outbreak of bloodshed in Singapore. Lee Kuan Yew was apparently upset by this development. After the communal clashes, his attitude toward the UMNO changed. Instead of attempting to bring about reform through cooperation with the Malay leadership of the Alliance within the established political order, he began to question the 1957 "racial bargain". He rejected the concept of Malay supremacy and sought to win popular support for the idea of a non-communal Malaysia - a Malaysian Malaysia - in which the state and the nation would not be identified with the supremacy and interests of any particular

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65. For the part that some UMNO leaders had played in the racial riots in 1964, see idem, "Communal Violence in Singapore", Asian Survey, 4, 10 (October 1964), 115-121; and Nancy McHenry Fletcher, op. cit., 40-44.

<sup>44</sup>The Straits Times, October 21, 1964.





community or race.

Throughout the nine months prior to Singapore's separation in August 1965, Lee Kuan Yew and his colleagues launched a vigorous campaign both inside and outside the federal parliament to put forth their case for a Malaysian Malaysia. The PAP weekly publication Malaysian Mirror which expounded the concept of a Malaysian Malaysia while laying bare the facts of Malay domination and Alliance's incompetence in solving national problems was widely circulated by Singapore's Ministry of Culture throughout Malaysia. The Malay leaders of the PAP also set out to appeal to the kampong Malays in Malaya by charging that the UMNO leadership was working hand-in-glove with wealthy Chinese to create a few more millionaires rather than to really help the poor. They tried to convince the Malay masses that democratic socialism rather than mere special rights was to be the only solution to the improvement of their economic conditions.

During his tour abroad in March and early April of 1965, Lee Kuan Yew carried his campaign for a Malaysian Malaysia to new Zealand and Australia (which had committed themselves to the defence of Malaysia against Indonesia) and won very sympathetic and favorable responses from the mass media in these two countries. Because of this, he was bitterly accused by the Alliance leaders of having overstepped his role as the Prime Minister of Singapore and of having stabbed Malaysia in the back.

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On May 9, 1965, five Malaysian opposition parties (the PAP, the Sarawak United People's Party, the People's Progressive Party, the United Democratic Party and the Machinda) met in Singapore and formed the Malaysian Solidarity Convention (MSC) to fight for a non-communal Malaysia and to advocate a program of democratic socialism as an answer to the economic disparities between the Malays and the other races. The Convention, like the AMCJA, also adopted a plan jointly to launch a series of public rallies in Malaysia to promote public support for the program of a Malaysian Malaysia.<sup>45</sup>

In late May and early June of 1965, when the federal Dewan Ra'ayat was in session, Lee Kuan Yew and his party were able to confront the Alliance with a united front of the MSC in the debate of the Speech from the Throne.<sup>46</sup> Being denied his time in the House to further clarify and defend his earlier charge that the Alliance government had directed its effort to build a Malay Malaysia dominated by the Malay community, he held a press conference in the Parliament Building in Kuala Lumpur on June 3 to restate his stand and specify the instances in which the UMNO had attempted to achieve Malay domination in Malaysia. It was on this occasion that Dr. Lim Chong Eu, the leader

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<sup>45</sup>See Sin Chew Jit Poh, May 8-13, 1965; and The Malaysian Solidarity Convention, Declaration by the Convenors of the Malaysian Solidarity Convention (Singapore: Koon Wah Lithographers, 1965).

<sup>46</sup>For Lee Kuan Yew's speech, see his The Battle for a Malaysian Malaysia (1) (Singapore: Ministry of Culture, 1965).





of the United Democratic Party, published the two letters written by Tan Siew Sin which contained information about the actual domination of the UMNO within the Alliance.<sup>47</sup>

To this series of Lee's challenges, the reactions of the UMNO and its partners had been extremely hostile and bitter. The two opposing cries - a Malay Malaysia and a Malaysian Malaysia - had again encountered a face-to-face confrontation. As a result, racial feelings and sentiments were exacerbated to a point where verbal confrontation was likely to be replaced by communal violence.

Although Singapore's breakaway could be attributed to the interplay of a number of inter-related factors,<sup>48</sup> the root causes of the split can be traced to the fact that PAP's Malaysian Malaysia had posed a direct challenge to the so-called "racial bargain" and a threat to the Alliance formula. The terms of 1957, first formulated in 1948, were designed to establish a Malay Malaya. To the Malay leaders, these terms represented the point where the Malay community

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<sup>47</sup>For Lee Kuan Yew's talks in the press conference and the two letters, see his The Battle for a Malaysian Malaysia (2), op. cit...

<sup>48</sup>For a discussion of these factors (such as the common market issue, Singapore's share of financial contribution to the Federation and loan to the Borneo states, UMNO's activities in Singapore, Lee's tour abroad and his personality, etc.), see Nancy McHenry Fletcher, op. cit., 11-15, 40-77; and R. S. Milne, "Singapore's Exit ...", op. cit., 175-184. See also C. P. FitzGerald, "The Expulsion of Singapore", The Nation, 201 (October 1965), 208-212; Han Suyin, "Singapore Separation", Far Eastern Economic Review, 49 (August 19, 1965), 349-352; R. Catley, "Malaysia: The Lost Battle for Merger", Australian Outlook, 21, 1 (April 1967), 44-60; and Jean Grossholtz, "An Exploration of Malaysian Meanings", Asian Survey, 6, 4 (April 1966), 227-240.



was no longer prepared to give any further accommodation to non-Malay interests. In other words, intercommunal cooperation, if it was to be acceptable to the Malays, required the acceptance by all non-Malay communities of the principle and fact of Malay supremacy. The Alliance formula had been acceptable because it was based on the common acceptance of the 1957 "racial bargain" by all the three partners. Ever since its formation in the early 1950's, the Malay leadership in the Alliance had demonstrated its resolve not to tolerate any challenge to the basic political order set up by the terms of 1957.<sup>49</sup> As the campaign for a Malaysian Malaysia launched by the PAP was a direct challenge to these terms, it stirred up a storm of hostile reaction from the UMNO and the general Malay public. As pointed out by Gordon P. Means, "A mood of increased militancy was discernible among the more

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<sup>49</sup>The Alliance crisis in 1959 demonstrated the determination of UMNO's leaders not to tolerate any challenge to the terms of 1957 from its non-Malay partners. Before the 1959 general elections, a group in the MCA led by its President Dr. Lim Chong Eu sought to modify those terms concerning language and education to the advantage of the Chinese and to demand an increase in the number of MCA's candidates in the elections. The Tunku warned that such an attempt would endanger the Alliance and national unity. He bluntly stated: "The sooner everybody appreciates that we must have one language for the country, the better. ... They should also realize that the Malay rulers have a big say in the matter. ... I want to make it clear that while we can give, we can also come to a point where we can stop giving. This is the point at which I can stop giving, that is, on the language issue." The Straits Times, October 8, 1959, 6. The group led by Dr. Lim failed and was later forced to leave the MCA. For an account of this crisis, see Daniel E. Moore, The United Malays National Organization and the 1959 Elections: A Study of a Political Party in Action in a Newly Independent Plural Society (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1960), 195ff.





communal Malays who became alarmed by the possibility of a fundamental political realignment."<sup>50</sup> The Malay mass media, led by the Utusan Melayu, launched a continuous hostile attack on Lee Kuan Yew and the concept of a Malaysian Malaysia, demanding that "to be a co-owner of Malaysia, the people should be converted into Muslims and adjust their way of life similar to that of the Malays."<sup>51</sup> The eviction of Singapore from the Federation was thus aimed at releasing the Alliance from the pressure of the PAP.

From UMNO's standpoint, the PAP had not only broken the understanding to confine its activities within Singapore but also, by openly demanding a Malaysian Malaysia, violated the practice of the Alliance to settle communal problems "in a committee room". Most importantly, the demand for a Malaysian Malaysia had confronted the Alliance with one of the most difficult challenges and placed it in an awkward and embarrassing dilemma. "To attack Lee seemed to place the Alliance in

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<sup>50</sup>"Within UMNO they began to press harder for measures that would reinforce their position in government. For example, a number of top UMNO officials were successful in their demands that they be given a more important role on policy-making within the government. Likewise, some UMNO branches proposed constitutional amendments to provide for uniform administration throughout Malaysia - a move designed to eliminate administrative autonomy in troublesome states controlled by opposition parties. Malay politicians stepped up their agitation for speedier implementation of the decision to make Malay the sole national language. The leading spokesman for this group even proposed that the government abandon English-medium instruction in primary schools." Gordon P. Means, Malaysian Politics (New York: New York University Press, 1970), 347.

<sup>51</sup>The Straits Times, June 14, 1965, 1, 6. The remark was Lee Kuan Yew's.





opposition to the idea. To praise the idea put the Alliance in a position crediting Lee."<sup>52</sup> To meet Lee's challenge, the tactics that the Alliance used were to accuse him and his party of being anti-Malay and of attempting to provoke racial violence to destroy Malaysia.

To add fuel to the flame of Malay antagonism, Lee Kuan Yew had restated in a number of occasions that the Malay community constituted only 39 percent of the total population and "none of the three major racial groups in Malaysia - Chinese, Malays and Indians - can claim to be more native to Malaysia than the others because all their ancestors came to Malaysia not more than 1,000 years ago."<sup>53</sup> Dato' Syed Ja'afar Albar, the Secretary-General of the UMNO, described Lee's statements as a "slap in the face of the Malays" and stated that "if the Government allows such provocations to continue", the Malays would "lose their patience", because "to say that the Malays are like

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<sup>52</sup>J. N. Parmer, op. cit., 114.

<sup>53</sup>Lee added, "According to history Malays began to migrate to Malaysia in noticeable numbers only about 700 years ago. Of the 39 percent Malays in Malaysia today, about one-third of them are comparatively new immigrants like the secretary-general of UMNO, Dato' Syed Ja'afar Albar, who came to Malaya from Indonesia just before the war at the age of more than 30. Therefore it is wrong and illogical for a particular racial group to think that they are more justified to be called Malaysians and that the others can become Malaysians only through their favour." The Straits Times, May 5, 1965, 6.



the other races in this country and that they have no extra right in calling this country their homeland is an insult to the Malay race."<sup>54</sup> Tunku Abdul Rahman also warned that if the Malays were not given a privileged position, "you will find that they will join the ranks of extremists and in the course of time you will find Malaysia joining Indonesia."<sup>55</sup> The Malay papers fiercely attacked the concept of a Malaysian Malaysia, charging that it was aimed at "destroying the Malay race in its own homeland and destroying Islam and the Islamic State of Malaysia".<sup>56</sup> The MCA and the MIC also joined force with the UMNO in accusing that the PAP was outright anti-Malay and was out to help Sukarno to destroy communal harmony and peace in Malaysia to satisfy Lee's ambition for power.

The open exchanges of charges and counter-charges between the Alliance and the PAP had not only aroused widespread non-Malay dissatisfaction with Malay domination and their desire for equality and full acceptance but also stirred up greater Malay awareness of their inferior numerical position and intensified their demands for more political privileges and speedier implementation of Malayization. By mid-1965, there had been increasing pressure within the UMNO to

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<sup>54</sup>The Straits Times, May 6, 1965, 18.

<sup>55</sup>The Sunday Times (Singapore), April 25, 1965; and Utusan Melayu, April 26, 1965.

<sup>56</sup>Utusan Melayu, July 16, 1965.





invoke the Internal Security Act to arrest the Singapore Prime Minister and the possibility of racial violence became imminent. Finally on August 9, 1965, Tunku Abdul Rahman decided against the use of "repressive measures" because "such action is repulsive to our concept of Parliamentary Democracy" and it "would not ... solve the problem." In order to avoid "disaster" to the country, he found that the only "way out" was "the separation of Singapore from the rest of the Federation."<sup>57</sup>

It has been suggested that the decision to evict Singapore from Malaysia was "an attempt to alleviate the symptoms by isolating the virus [of racial violence]."<sup>58</sup> In fact, however, the "virus" had been inherent in the political and economic divisions of power set up by the terms of 1957 and the Alliance pattern of communal politics; Lee Kuan Yew's slogan for a Malaysian Malaysia and PAP's challenge to Alliance's dominance served only to activate them. Singapore's expulsion was, therefore, only a temporary respite, for the "virus" of communal conflict could become active without Singapore's or PAP's presence in Malaysia.

It is thus clear that the non-Malay quest for an equal status with the Malays both in pre-war and post-war Malaya has now found its

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<sup>57</sup>Tunku Abdul Rahman's speech on Singapore's separation in the Dewan Ra'ayat on August 9, 1965. See The Straits Times, August 10, 1965. For Tan Siew Sin's account of the separation, see his The Truth Behind a Major Tragedy (Kuala Lumpur: MCA Headquarters, 1965).

<sup>58</sup>Nancy McHenry Fletcher, op. cit., 79.



expression in the concept of a Malaysian Malaysia. Since the end of the Second World War, the new generation of the non-Malay communities has been subject to a socialization process and a political environment which demand their identification with the country. Today, their attachment to, and their identification with, Malaysia can no longer be questioned and this sentiment has been well expressed in their growing desire for full acceptance in the country. The more the non-Malays become attached to and identified with Malaysia, the more they expect from the government.<sup>59</sup> But, as seen in the last chapter, the capability of the government to respond to non-Malay demands for participatory equality and full acceptance is limited by the "racial bargain" which demands the political system to maintain and perpetuate Malay domination and to pursue a cultural policy of Malayization. As a result, the Malaysian identity that the non-Malays have acquired in the last twenty-five years is, in actual fact, not congruent with what the bumiputra want them to be. This dissonant situation creates a tension in the orientations of the non-Malay communities and leads to the repudiation of the so-called "consensus" under which the Federation was formed.

The concept of a Malaysian Malaysia did not die with the departure of Singapore. At the time of Singapore's breakaway, it

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<sup>59</sup>See Wang Gungwu, "Chinese Politics in Malaya", China Quarterly, 43, (July-September 1970), 1-30.



had already received wide publicity among the non-Malay communities. Right from Singapore's separation up to the racial bloodshed in May 1969, "Malaysian Malaysia" had been the focal point of public discussion and political exchanges among political parties. As a result, political consciousness of the major communal groups has been aroused to a new level, where the new generation of the non-Malays is committed to the idea of a non-communal Malaysia "to fight in terms of abstract political principles for the equal rights of all Malaysians."<sup>60</sup> To this non-Malay pressure, the Malays respond with aggressive demands for speeding up the process of Malayization and for constitutional amendments to make Malay special position beyond challenge.

No doubt, nation-building is the urgent task of Malaysia. But what type of a nation is Malaysia going to build? Apparently, the dominant Malay elites have been committed to the building of a a Malay nation. But as seen in Chapter VII, it is highly unlikely that the non-Malays would accept a Malay Malaysia without resistance as Malayization lacks both utilitarian and identitive powers for its peaceful and successful materialization. Then, is a Malaysian nation a viable alternative? Can political integration and unity be achieved within the context of cultural pluralism and racial diversity?

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<sup>60</sup>See Wang Gungwu, op. cit., 25-28.





## CHAPTER IX

### TOWARD A MALAYSIAN MALAYSIA

As expounded by its exponents,<sup>1</sup> the idea of a Malaysian Malaysia is derived from the concept of cultural pluralism which, as a solution to the majority-minority problem, is opposed to as-

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<sup>1</sup>Lee Kuan Yew's views on a Malaysian Malaysia can be found in his numerous speeches and statements in the press and the Malaysian Mirror (or The Mirror, after Singapore's separation) in 1965 and the following publications: The Battle for a Malaysian Malaysia (1) and (2), (Singapore: Ministry of Culture, 1965); Toward A Malaysian Malaysia (Singapore: Ministry of Culture, 1965); Are There Enough Malaysians to Save Malaysia? (Singapore: Ministry of Culture, 1965); and Separation: Singapore's Independence on 9th August 1965 (Singapore: Ministry of Culture, 1965). One important statement issued by the Malaysian Solidarity Convention was the Declaration by the Convenors of the Malaysian Solidarity Convention (Singapore: Koon Wah Lithographers, 1965). The concept has been elaborated in greater detail by the Democratic Action Party (DAP), PAP's successor in Malaysia after Singapore's departure, whose numerous statements on the subject can be found in its monthly publication The Rocket (1966 to early 1969). Who Lives if Malaysia Dies? The DAP's Case for a Multi-Racial Society (Petaling Jaya: DAP Headquarters, 1969) is a collection of the major speeches, policy statements and declarations of the DAP. During 1965-1969, political parties and students had sponsored a number of public seminars and debates on the issue of communalism and nation-building. Some speeches of the major participants in these debates can be found reported in the Eastern Sun, The Opinion and a special issue of the Intisari (Vol. 3, No. 2, 1968). No major scholarly investigations have been made on the subject; but see, however, T. Bhagwan Singh, "Concept of 'Malaysian Malaysia' - A Brief Appraisal", Journal of the Historical Society (University of Malaya), 6 (1967-68), 41-50.



similation. Unlike assimilation which requires the complete abandonment by the minorities of their racial, cultural, and linguistic characteristics peculiar to them and their complete absorption into the cultural patterns of the national majority, cultural pluralism demands the national majority to respect the social and cultural diversities of the minorities and to tolerate and even encourage their development and growth. In the case of assimilation, national states and national minorities are seen as mutually incompatible and the minorities are required to relinquish their sub-cultural attachments and orientations and their desire of being different. Cultural pluralism, on the other hand, stands for unity in diversities and mutual accommodation and respect of social and cultural differences among the groups.<sup>2</sup>

### Cultural Pluralism and Political Integration

Essential to the concept of a Malaysian Malaysia are two inter-related beliefs regarding the feasibility and viability of assimilation as a solution to the problem of nation-building in Malaysia. First, it is believed that cultural assimilation is not only inherently undesirable but also unfeasible and futile. Second, it is also

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<sup>2</sup>For a brief discussion of the concepts of assimilation and cultural pluralism, see Inis L. Claude, Jr., National Minorities: An International Problem (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955), 78-91; and Milton M. Gordon, Assimilation in American Life (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 132-159.





held that political integration or the development of a common tie with the polity and the sense of confidence and trust among the members of the various communities in Malaysia can be achieved without destroying the multicultural character of the country, thus rejecting the view that a common loyalty among the various communities can be created only through the eradication and suppression of social and cultural diversity. These two beliefs need to be clarified.

In Malaysia, due to the absence of a national culture, cultural assimilation is seen in terms of the various communal groups' taking on the ways and behavioral patterns of a supposed dominant group whose communal culture is claimed to be the model of "Malaysian" culture. As embodied in the Malayization scheme, cultural assimilation is a process of deculturization, involving the eventual eradication of cultural diversity in Malaysia in favor of a homogeneous cultural pattern based on the present Malay sub-culture. But deculturization and racial hegemony are an undesirable principle to be adopted anywhere in the world because, like an individual, each racial community as a cultural group has as much right to exist and grow as any other racial community. The cultural values and heritage that the members of each community in Malaysia share are very much an integral part of their existence. To deprive any community of these values and heritage is thus to commit collective extinction in the cultural and spiritual sense, which is a severe deprivation, a depri-

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vation which is far more severe than to take away its property and physical belongings.

Secondly, human civilization is not the product of deculturation but the result of acculturation. Each community in Malaysia is an indispensable player and has a unique tone to sound in the symphony of a new Malaysian culture. It is, therefore, a need of civilization that each community in Malaysia be tolerated and encouraged to freely make its best contribution to the formation of this new cultural identity of the country.

There can be no justification for turning Malaya into a cockpit for aggressive cultures. By virtue of its composite population it should be a land where the developing culture draws its validity from acceptance of the high values of other cultures.<sup>3</sup>

"Cultural diversity", Tan Cheng Lock declared, "is as desirable as individual diversity. Variety is the indispensable condition of the human mind."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>William P. Fenn and Wu Teh-yao, Chinese Schools and the Education of Chinese Malaysians (The Fenn-Wu Report), (Kuala Lumpur: Government Press, 1951), 2. Most of the recommendations of this Report were not adopted by the government.

<sup>4</sup>He added: "The combination of different races or nations in one State is as necessary a condition of civilized life as the combination of men in society. Inferior races are raised by living in political union with races intellectually superior. ... A state which is incompetent to satisfy different races condemns itself; a State which labours to neutralize, to absorb, or to expel them, destroys its own



Thirdly, an individual is related to his cultural group involuntarily and indissolubly as the intersection of a line of ancestry and a line of social and cultural patterns. Assimilation is, therefore, held to be socially and emotionally harmful to the individuals concerned because a deculturized person is a rootless and impoverished soul, incapable of normal self-actualization and growth. Moreover, "no deculturized group will have anything to offer. The resulting culture will be the weaker for the poverty of its contributing units".<sup>5</sup>

Finally, if a multicultural approach to the conflict between communal attachment and identification with the national community is to be adopted, the commitment to the common national entity would be added to but would not replace the sub-cultural attachments of the various communities. According to Sidney Verba, such a solution is more "conducive to the creation of a political culture supportive of democracy" than assimilation because "political commitment is tempered by multiple commitments to other social units."<sup>6</sup> In Malaysia,

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vitality; a State which does not include them is destitute of the chief basis of self-government." Tan Cheng Lock, One Country, One People, One Government (Presidential Address to the General Committee of the MCA on October 30, 1949), (Kuala Lumpur: MCA Headquarters, 1966), 2.

<sup>5</sup>Fenn-Wu Report, op. cit., 3.

<sup>6</sup>Sidney Verba, "Comparative Political Culture", in Lucian W. Pye and Sidney Verba (eds.), Political Culture and Political Development (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965), 534.





the creation of a Malaysian identity through the use of the languages and cultural channels of the various races can more easily be accomplished than the creation of a Malay identity through the use of Malay and Malay-Muslim cultural means alone.

Assimilation might be a successful long-term device for nation-building, however, if all dissident elements could be held in check until they, or their descendants, were completely absorbed into the dominant cultural patterns. But, as communal or national groups are always devoted to the ideal of collective survival and passionately determined not to be deculturized, any attempt at assimilation by a dominant group serves only to stimulate communal consciousness, and inter-communal fear, distrust and antagonism, and reinforce their intractability. In the event that the resources and power that an assimilative solution commands fail to hold the forces of resistance in check, the result would most probably be chaos, civil war, or disintegration. In Malaysia, any single community is by itself, outnumbered by the rest. The Malays do not constitute a national majority. Neither do the Chinese, nor the Indians, nor any other groups. The unfeasibility of an assimilative solution, whether Malayization, Sinification or "Indianization", is thus self-evident.

It was seen earlier in this study that Malayization lacks both utilitarian and identitive powers for its peaceful implementation. This means that non-Malay resistance is bound to be considera-

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ble and persistent. Meanwhile, since Malayization is aimed at creating a nation of "one race, one language and one culture" based on Malay-Muslim cultural patterns, it fails to convince the non-Malays that they would be treated as the Malays' equals if they acquiesced in being Malayized as the attempt at Malayization is being seen as an assertion of racial hegemony of the Malay community. The claim of bumiputraisim is the basic source of rationalization for the maintenance and perpetuation of Malay supremacy and special privileges. But bumiputraisim, as seen elsewhere, is fundamentally a racial concept. In terms of prior residence in the country, the indigenous peoples and the Orang Asli are more entitled to be called bumiputra than the Malays; but as it turns out, these natives are not the principal beneficiaries under the present system of special privileges. These special privileges have, in fact, formed the center of a vested interest in the Malay society which tends to perpetuate itself and resist any attempt at its abolition. In view of this and the fact that the Malays have not been resocialized to accept the non-Malays as their equals, there is reason to believe that the Malayization of the non-Malays, even if it were successful, is unlikely to lead to their complete acceptance by the Malay community because such acceptance would automatically put an end to Malay special privileges and the claim of bumiputraisim upon which the whole system of Malay special position is based.

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Cultural pluralism is a fact of Malaysian life. The concept of a Malaysian Malaysia accepts this fact as the condition to bring about a common identification with the polity and political trust among the members of the different communities. It believes that cultural multiplicity is not an unsurmountable barrier to political integration. This belief is borne out by previous experience of nation-building in other parts of the world. For example, the peoples of a number of countries (Britain, United States, Australia, New Zealand, etc.) may share a common racial origin and cultural heritage, speak the same language, and practise the same religion and traditions but belong to different political entities having different political orientations and loyalties. Vietnam, Korea, and Germany all have a high degree of cultural homogeneity and yet each of them has been divided into two hostile or warring halves with the emergence of two conflicting political cultures. On the other hand, however, the cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversities of Switzerland do not inhibit the development of a common vertical identification and a broad political consensus among its four nationalities - German, French, Italian and Romansch.<sup>7</sup> Countries like Tanzania

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<sup>7</sup>See Max Huber, "The Swiss Concept of the State" in Sir Alfred Zimmermann (ed.), Modern Political Doctrines (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), 215-217; Kenneth D. McRae, Switzerland: Examples of Cultural Coexistence (Toronto: Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 1964); and Charlotte Muret, "The Swiss Pattern for a Federated Europe", in Edward Mead Earle (ed.), Nationalism and Internationalism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), 261-284.



and Iran are not particularly handicapped by their linguistic multiplicity, whereas Lebanon is often beset with sectarian conflicts despite the fact that its population is almost entirely Arabic-speaking.<sup>8</sup> All this indicates is that "the unity of a nation depends not upon the singleness of tongue or simplicity of culture; it lies in the hearts of its citizens."<sup>9</sup> As Karl W. Deutsch pointed out,

... all the usual descriptions of a people in terms of a community of languages, or character, or memories, or past history, are open to exception. For what counts is not the presence or absence of any single factor, but merely the presence of sufficient communication facilities with enough complementarity to produce the overall result.<sup>10</sup>

In Malaysia, undue concern with Malayization on the part of the Malay elites obscures the fact that political integration -- the development of a common vertical identification, a strong sense of political trust and confidence, and a pool of commonly accepted norms regarding political behavior among the fellow-citizens of a political system -- does not necessarily depend upon cultural assimi-

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<sup>8</sup> See Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States" in his (ed.), Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa (New York: The Free Press, 1963), 112-113, 142-145.

<sup>9</sup> Fenn-Wu Report, op. cit., 4-5.

<sup>10</sup> Karl Deutsch, Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1953), 71.



lation. The ruthless adoption of a single-language policy in a multilingual country may lead to political disintegration rather than integration; but alternatively political integration can be achieved through complicated language formula arrived at through elaborate negotiations, bargaining and accommodation. It is true that one way of coping with social and cultural diversity is to use forceful means to suppress and eradicate it; but in a communal society like Malaysia where each of the major communal groups is preoccupied with the fear of losing its communal identity and cultural values, a monocultural approach is bound to translate this fear into active resistance which will cause widespread alienation and hinder the growth of vertical identification with the political system and the sense of horizontal identification among the members of the various communities. Therefore, a more viable alternative to Malayization is to build a Malaysian Malaysia, i.e., to search out institutional arrangements that will encourage dialogue, unblock communication channels, keep political and governmental leaders on their toes and responsive to all citizens irrespective of race, facilitate the articulation and aggregation of conflicting interests, the accommodation of cultural differences and the eventual elimination of economic disparities among the communities, and in these ways create a sense of political efficacy and cultural equality among the different communities while building national unity out of cultural diversity.

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A Malaysian Malaysia is a multiracial, multicultural and multilingual Malaysia. It is "not identified with the supremacy, well-being and interests of any one particular community or race." It is "the antithesis of a Malay Malaysia, a Chinese Malaysia, a Dyak Malaysia, an Indian Malaysia or Kadazan Malaysia".<sup>11</sup> The central unit with which all citizens are required to identify is not race or community but the entire Malaysian entity which is an aggregate of all the communities and races. "Not only must Indians and Chinese become Malaysians, so must the Malays become Malaysians."<sup>12</sup> Every race and community, including its language and culture, should be treated as an integral part of the Malaysian society so that no one in the country needs to fear that he will be forced to relinquish his cultural heritage and values. To achieve this goal, the importance of cultural integration should be recognized and emphasized. Unlike assimilation, integration is not a process of deculturization in favor of the hegemony of one community. It is a process of acculturation, accommodation and interpenetration among different cultures which will, in the long run, lead to the emergence of a new Malaysian culture, a culture which is uniquely Malaysian in its outlook and essence and embodies elements of all cultures - Malay, Chinese, Indian,

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<sup>11</sup> See Declaration by the Convenors of the Malaysian Solidarity Convention, op. cit., 24.

<sup>12</sup> Coh Hock Guan, "Integration or Assimilation?" in Who Lives if Malaysia Dies?, op. cit., 234.



Kadazan, Iban, Western, and others.

The formation of a new culture through the natural mingling of diverse cultural elements is usually a slow and long process. In Malaysia, such a process may take many generations; but the slowness and length of the process of acculturation and integration cannot be used as an argument against the adoption of a multicultural solution to the problem of nation-building in the country. In fact, as pointed out by Lee Kuan Yew, in the Malaysian situation, "there is no other way" than building a multiracial Malaysia.<sup>13</sup> The Swiss experience seems to indicate that this is both possible and feasible. Although the process of creating a Swiss national culture by integrating the cultures of the various nationalities is not yet completed, cultural coexistence has already led to the emergence of a Swiss political nation supreme over the nationalities. This Swiss political nation is based, "not on ethnic or, more particularly, on linguistic peculiarities or on nationalities, but solely on a common history and common ideas."<sup>14</sup> This is why a Swiss can "communicate more effectively with other Swiss than with the speakers of his own language who belong to other people."<sup>15</sup> "The German-speaking Swiss do not regard

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<sup>13</sup> Lee Kuan Yew, Malaysia: Age of Revolution (Singapore: Ministry of Culture, 1965), 58.

<sup>14</sup> Max Huber, op. cit., 216.

<sup>15</sup> Karl W. Deutsch, op. cit., 71. Ernst Schusrch, the editor of a prominent German-Swiss paper, wrote: "I found that my German was more





French or Italian as 'foreign' languages, but as the 'second' or 'third' national language, because the three official tongues are inseparable from Swiss local life and character."<sup>16</sup> What the Swiss experience demonstrates is that "linguistic and cultural diversity need raise no insuperable barriers to political unity."<sup>17</sup>

The immediate task of nation-building in Malaysia is thus to bring about political integration - the development of a broad consensus on political fundamentals regarding political orientations and a common identification with the polity which is added to but does not replace sub-cultural identifications at the communal level. It is true that political integration is only one dimension of the whole process of cultural integration. It is, nevertheless, the most important unifying factor in a multiracial, multicultural and multilingual society, not only because it provides a link that binds the different communities together under a common political authority, but also because it can hasten the integrative process in other fields.

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closely akin to the French of my [French-Swiss] friend than to the likewise German (Ebenfallsdeutsch) of the foreigner. The French-Swiss and I were using different words for the same concepts, but we understand each other. The man from Vienna and I were using the same words for different concepts, and thus we did not understand each other in the least." As quoted in Karl W. Deutsch, loc. cit... Thus, "the Swiss may speak four different languages and still act as one people." Loc. cit...

<sup>16</sup>Oscar I. Janowsky, Nationalities and National Minorities (New York: Macmillan Co., 1945), 41.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 37. The German-speaking Swiss constitute an absolute-majority status (around 70 percent of the total population).



Political Integration, coupled with cultural coexistence, is, therefore, the best possible guarantee for communal harmony in Malaysia, and the prerequisite for the eventual integration and mingling of the different cultural elements into a new Malaysian culture.

Very few societies in the world are monist or homogeneous in their cultural orientations. In fact, "every society has pluralistic aspects."<sup>18</sup> Cultural differentiation exists not only among different groups but also among different classes or sections within each group. It is "going on, both among ethnic groups and within particular ethnic groups."<sup>19</sup> Both cultural integration and differentiation, in other words, can go on concurrently in the same group at different levels and in different parts of the society. As long as cultural differentiation is accepted as being legitimate by the common political orientations, it ceases to be a disintegrating factor. The fact that "Toronto now boasts eight movie houses that show only Italian films and three that show only German" and that "several

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<sup>18</sup>See Lloyd Braithwaite, "Social Stratification and Cultural Pluralism", Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, 83 (January 1957), 821. See also M. G. Smith, "Social and Cultural Pluralism", Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, 83 (January 1957), 763-777; and Marie R. Haug, "Social and Cultural Pluralism as a Concept in Social System Analysis", American Journal of Sociology, 73, 3 (November 1967), 294-304.

<sup>19</sup>Frank G. Vallee, Mildred Schwartz, and Frank Darknell, "Ethnic Assimilation and Differentiation in Canada", Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, 23, 4 (November 1957), 541.



Canadian radio stations devote many hours to broadcasts in foreign languages"<sup>20</sup> is not a sign that Canada, as a political unit, is in the process of disintegration. Similarly, although there is a cultural gap between the English-educated and the vernacular-educated Malays in Malaysia, one cannot infer from this differentiation that the former are more loyal and attached to Malaysia than the latter, or vice versa. All this shows is that what really binds the diverse groups of a country together as a people is the existence of a common commitment to a political culture defining both vertical and horizontal identifications among them. This does not, however, mean that the political culture of an integrated community is completely homogeneous. In fact, all political cultures are compound - partly uniform and partly fragmented, because not all members of a political community are of a single mind. What holds the people of a country together as a viable and self-perpetuating political nation is, thus, not complete homogeneity of culture or complete agreement on all political issues, but the development and institutionalization of a broad consensus regarding certain political fundamentals among political actors. In Malaysia, all political fundamentals are ultimately related to the principle of racial equality - multiracialism, multiculturalism, multilingualism, political equality and economic equality. Under the principle of racial parity, a Malaysian nation

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<sup>20</sup>Frank G. Vallee, et. al., op. cit., 542.





can be created through the long process of building unity in diversity and of seeking common grounds among the communities while accommodating their differences.

### Trends and Problems

As pointed out by Tan Cheng Lock in 1948,

The specific problem in Malaya is how to integrate the several races living in the country into a single political community, so that it may become a nation animated by Malayan-mindedness and Malayan patriotism. This can best be achieved by basing the country's constitution on the fundamental principle of equality for all, irrespective of race or creed, who claim Malaya as their permanent home.<sup>21</sup>

A Malaysian nation based on the principle of racial and cultural equality is one that is not identified with the interests and supremacy of any particular race or community. Therefore, in a Malaysian Malaysia, every race or community in the country and its cultural heritage are to be accepted as an integral part of the new Malaysian identity. In this way, the fear of losing one's cultural values can be eradicated and a sense of mutual trust and confidence can be cultivated among the members of the different communal groups.

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<sup>21</sup>Tan Cheng Lock, "A Chinese View of Malaya" in David R. Rees-Williams, Tan Cheng Lock, S. S. Awbery and F. W. Dalley, Three Reports on the Malayan Problem (New York: International Secretariat, Institute of Pacific Relations, January 1949), 19.



Unlike Malayization which demands the non-Malays to abandon their cultural and linguistic peculiarities to become parts of the Malay nation, the idea of a Malaysian Malaysia requires that all members of the Malaysian society, whether they be Malays or non-Malays, must go through the same process of resocialization and cultural re-orientation in order to become Malaysians. As Malayization assumes that the Malay community is the core-unit of the Malaysian society while everything that is non-Malay is alien, only the non-Malays are required to do all the changing. In a Malaysian Malaysia, however, the change is not one-sided but mutual: the Malays are to become less Malay, the Chinese less Chinese, the Indians less Indian, the Ibans less Iban and so on, and all are to become more Malaysian. "The special and legitimate interests of different communities must be secured and promoted within the framework of the collective rights, interests and responsibilities of all races."<sup>22</sup> In other words, the Malaysian identity that is to emerge is the synthesis of the cultures and interests of all races and communities in the country. Regardless of his racial origin, every Malaysian citizen is to be regarded as a bumiputra having equal political rights. In this way, a sense of full acceptance can be created among the different communities, thus facilitating the growth of a common tie with the emerging new Malaysian nation.

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<sup>22</sup> Declaration by the Convenors of the Malaysian Solidarity Convention, op. cit., 24.





One of the usual arguments against the concept of a Malaysian Malaysia is that no one in Malaysia can be Malaysianized for the simple reason that there is no "Malaysian" pattern to act as a model of Malaysianization. According to this argument, to create a "Malaysian nation" needs a core culture to serve as its base. In other words, the cultural pattern of one particular community in Malaysia should be accepted by all as the model into which the rest of the communities are to be absorbed in the long run. By virtue of the fact that Malaysia was once in history a part of the Malay world (or Nusantara, as it is now known among the Malay intellectuals in Malaysia) in Southeast Asia, the Malay community claims to be the rightful owners of the country and the only legitimate model of the new Malaysian nation. Thus, a "Malaysian" Malaysia is equated with a Malay Malaysia, "Malaysian" nationalism with Malay nationalism, and the process of nation-building with Malayization.

The above argument against Malaysianization is not, however, free from bias and oversimplification. In the first place, it identifies the process of nation-building with that of assimilation. But, as pointed out elsewhere, the development of a sense of vertical and horizontal identifications among the diverse cultural groups does not necessarily call for the elimination of cultural pluralism. It is undeniable that many non-Malays, especially the younger generations, are now as attached and loyal to Malaysia as the Malays, although they

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have not been Malayized. In Singapore, assimilation has never been thought as a feasible approach to nation-building in that island republic, despite the fact that the Chinese population constitutes almost three quarters of the total. The rejection of cultural assimilation in favor of cultural pluralism in Singapore, as shown by a recent "Singapore National Identity Survey",<sup>23</sup> does not inhibit, but in fact, greatly facilitates and encourages, the growth of a Singaporean consciousness and identity. Full acceptance not only reduces foreign attraction to the various communal groups but also produces a sense of deeper attachment to the environment in which these communities live.. In Malaysia, on the other hand, the preoccupation and undue concern of the dominant Malay political elites with Malayization have led to intercommunal fear, distrust, suspicion and antagonism rather than mutual respect and tolerance.

In a multicultural society like Malaysia, to equate nation-building with assimilation is tantamount to asserting racial hegemony

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<sup>23</sup>The Survey was designed and supervised by two sociologists, J. A. MacDougall and Chiew Seen Kong, of the University of Singapore. The Survey shows that nine out of ten respondents regarded themselves as "Singaporeans" and considered it "right" to have tolerance and equal treatment in the Republic. In summing up the results of the Survey, Dr. MacDougall said: "The vast majority of Singapore citizens of all communities identify themselves as Singaporeans. When confronted with the choice of being called a Singaporean or a member of their own community, by far most prefer to be called Singaporeans. Most want to live in Singapore (7 out of 10) more than in any other country in the world." See The Straits Times, May 11, 1970, 5.



over all the others. To take nation-building in this narrow sense as meaning simply a process of assimilation - the elimination of the cultural traits of diverse communities into the cultural pattern of the dominant group - is to commit oneself to the view that communalism can be eradicated by promoting the communal aspirations of one single community at the expense of other communities. In fact, however, communalism begets communalism. The effort of the Malays at Malayization tends to increase the efforts of the non-Malay communities to seek safety and protection in the company of their own fellow-racials and make them more susceptible to the attraction and influence of their ancestors' homelands abroad. It is also bound to lead to the polarization of the Malaysian population into two opposing camps - the Malays versus the non-Malays - with the Malays looking at the non-Malays as their adversaries and the non-Malays seeing the Malays as their oppressors.

Secondly, while the deep emotional appeal of Malay nationalism should be appreciated and accommodated by all communities, the claim of Malay supremacy on the basis of bumiputraisim is open to question. In fact, as seen earlier in this study, bumiputraisim is essentially a racial concept.<sup>24</sup> Regardless of the length of residence in Malaysia, all Malays are bumiputra, whereas a Chinese or an Indian, however long his ancestors may have settled in the country, is not a bumiputra. The indigenous peoples in the Borneo states and

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<sup>24</sup>Supra, 118-127, 306-310.





the natives in the Malayan peninsula, who are the genuine sons of the soil, have been given less special privileges than the Malays under the constitution.<sup>25</sup> It is true that Malay-Muslim culture was the ruling culture in the Malay sultanates in the peninsula prior to the era of colonial rule. But it should be pointed out that the faces of many countries in the world (such as the United States, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia prior to the immigration of English-speaking settlers) have been changed completely through migration in human history. Malaysia has no exception. Through British administration and the immigration of the non-Malay races, it has now become a "plural" society and its culture has also become diversified.

The Malays could have established their legitimacy as the entire Malaysian nation had the process of Malay state- and nation-building not been thwarted by foreign intervention before the non-Malay immigrants arrived en masse.<sup>26</sup> To many Malay nationalists, the fact that the Malay community does not constitute the Malaysian nation but a mere community among many equals must be painful and hard to swallow. But one cannot be blind to the reality that the non-Malay communities are there to stay permanently and their cultural patterns have already taken root in the Malaysian soil and have now become so much a part of Malaysian way of life that Malaysian identity can no

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<sup>25</sup>Supra, 306, note 34.

<sup>26</sup>Supra, 145-146.



longer be equated with Malay identity alone. In other words, non-Malay cultural patterns can no longer be regarded as "alien" or "foreign"; they have indeed become an integral component of the emerging Malaysian identity. To insist that the Malay community constitutes the core-unit, and Malay-Muslim culture the core culture, for nation-building in Malaysia is to completely ignore the multicultural realities that have emerged due to colonial administration and the permanent settlement of the non-Malay communities in the country. Whether one likes it or not, one has to recognize that the Malay community constitutes only one dimension of the whole Malaysian identity and that to insist upon Malay supremacy is an attempt at racial hegemony and ascendancy - an attempt to adjust the multicultural and multiracial realities to fit the communal aspirations of the Malays.

It is certainly not accurate to claim that only the Malays and the natives have local orientations whereas the Chinese and the Indians are aliens oriented toward the countries of their origin. In fact, a Malaysian identity has already emerged among the vast majority of the non-Malays. As one recent study of the Indians in Malaysia and Singapore points out,

it would be an error to talk of them [Indians] collectively and assume that a set of Indian attitudes can be identified. One thing that can be said with confidence is that the Indian orientation has disappeared among a vast majority of these people. It

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persists only among the most elderly Indians, and this too in the form of a nostalgia for the village or town of their birth, and an emotional attachment to close relatives in the family whom they have left behind. Neither of these factors operates in the great majority of locally-born Indians.<sup>27</sup>

This observation is equally valid in the case of the Chinese community in Malaysia.<sup>28</sup> Nationalism in China was essentially a twentieth-century phenomenon, gaining momentum after the May 4th Movement in 1919 and finally becoming the driving force against Japanese invasion. Except for a small group of intellectuals who had previously been exposed to the idea of Chinese nationalism and had joined either the Kuomintang or the Communist Party, the bulk of Chinese immigrants in Malaya consisted of the uneducated, politically apathetic, rural and poor peasants from Kwangtung and Fukien, whose love for China was not inspired by a national consciousness but by a strong nostalgia for the hsiang (village) or ch'en (town) of their birth and an emotional tie both to their close relatives in China and to the traditional Chinese culture as a way of life. Such emotional attachments are not peculiar to the Chinese; they are common among the first generation

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<sup>27</sup> Sinnappah Arasaratnam, Indians in Malaysia and Singapore (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 196.

<sup>28</sup> See Maurice Freedman, The Chinese in Southeast Asia: A Longer View (London: Occasional Paper No. 14, China Society, 1964); and Lea E. Williams, The Future of Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966).



of immigrant life in all parts of the world including Indonesian immigrants in Malaysia.<sup>29</sup> But with the passing away of the first-generation immigrants, nostalgia for the home country and attachment to close relatives in the home country have usually diminished and finally become an insignificant factor.

In Malaysia, around 90 percent of the Chinese population are now locally-born and the majority of them is under 25 years of age. Except for a short period after the Second World War, normal communications between Malaya and China have virtually been cut off ever since the later part of the 1930's, first due to the war between China and Japan and the Japanese occupation of Malaya, and later due to the Emergency in Malaya and the Communist takeover in China. Today, Chinese orientation in the form of nostalgia for the home country and emotional attachment to close relatives in the home villages have almost completely disappeared among the young generation of the Chinese population.<sup>30</sup> The reasons for this are obvious: their birthplace is in Malaysia; their close relatives are in Malaysia; the graves of their elders are in Malaysia; they are educated in Malaysia and make a living in Malaysia. To most of them, China is a remote entity which has

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<sup>29</sup> Supra, 124, note 106. See also A. B. Ramsay, "Indonesians in Malaya," Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Malayan Branch), 29, 1 (May 1956), 119-124.

<sup>30</sup> It has now become increasingly difficult for the older Chinese to convince the younger members of their families of the necessity to remit money to relatives in China. First, they all have their own financial problems to take care of. Second, the relationship is too remote to these young Chinese to make them feel duty-bound to support their relatives whom they have never seen.



meaning only in cultural terms. Many of them are now unable to name the birthplace of their ancestors. This increasing identification with Malaysia has given rise to increasing frustration with the inferior role that they have been assigned to play in the political system and to a more vocal demand for equal rights and full acceptance.

While one's birthplace and close relatives could be left behind in one's home country and forgotten after one or two generations, culture, language, traditions and way of life are different as they constitute an integral part of one's existence. As long as men of the same cultural patterns are not completely isolated from one another, their cultural orientations are bound to pass from generation to generation through families, social organizations, schools, community life and other socialization media. The Chinese and Indian immigrants arrived en masse and settled in the country as two distinct collective wholes, adding diversity to those cultural elements already taken root in the peninsula. To meet the cultural needs of the members of their own community, the non-Malay immigrants established schools to educate their children and set up newspapers and community centers and clan associations to promote their own cultural patterns and heritage. Each community was a culturally self-sufficient group.<sup>31</sup> As a result, non-Malay cultures flourished and took root in the Malay-

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<sup>31</sup>Supra, 193-199.





sian soil and had been shaped and influenced by the local environments. In today's Malaysia, these cultural patterns constitute one integral component of the Malaysian identity as much as Malay and European cultures. It is the attempt of the Malay political elites to deny a place to these cultures in the Malaysian society that has been the source of non-Malay frustration and resentment.

It is true that Chinese schools before the early 1950's had been China-oriented, using textbooks which had little Malayan content. But this was not peculiar to the Chinese schools; the textbooks used in English and Indian schools during the same period had little local content either. Such a phenomenon was the direct result of circumstances and could not be blamed on any particular community because there had simply been no attempt on the part of the ruling elites at creating a common Malayan consciousness among the different communities except for the effort to produce a small group of English-educated personnel to facilitate administration, communication and political control. The pretence that Malaya was the land of the Malays while the non-Malays were aliens had been maintained right up to the outbreak of the Japanese invasion. The same belief was encouraged by the Japanese during the Occupation.<sup>32</sup> After the surrender of the Japanese, the abortive Malayan Union scheme was followed by the revival

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<sup>32</sup>Supra, 209-214.



of the principle of Malay supremacy. Against the protest and objection of the active non-Malay public which demanded a Malayan Malaya, the status of the Malays as the rightful owners of the country was given recognition in the Federation of Malaya Agreement of 1948.<sup>33</sup> If this background is taken into full account, the non-Malay practice of educating their own children in their own way and according to the traditions of their home countries during the pre-independence period strikes no one as being strange or abnormal. In fact, being treated as aliens, what else could the non-Malays do?

It is important to notice, however, that the lack of official interest in fostering a Malayan consciousness did not prevent the non-Malays from becoming increasingly identified with Malaya. This identification grew, not only because of the trend of the non-Malay immigrants toward permanent settlement, the emergence of a new generation of locally-born non-Malays, and their complete isolation from China and India during the Second World War, but also because of the conscious and genuine efforts that the non-Malays themselves had taken to adapt to their new status as a settled population and the changing political climate in Malaya. It is inaccurate to insist that the non-Malay communities have never been willing to acquire a Malaya- or Malaysia-oriented outlook to substitute for their home-country orien-

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<sup>33</sup>Supra, 238-268.





tations, or that the Chinese or Indian community has intended to make Malaya a province of China or India. In fact, there is almost no instance where the non-Malays have actively sought to remain aliens.<sup>34</sup> On the contrary, ever since the end of the Second World War, the political activities of the non-Malay communities have been mainly directed toward the attainment of their acceptance by the Malay community as full nationals of the country. One also looks in vain for conclusive evidence of Chinese or Indian effort to make Malaya or Malaysia a "third China" or a "second India". No non-Malay political movement, including the extreme left, has harbored such an attempt. Ironically, however, the un-Malaysian character of the Melayu-Raya movement has rarely been questioned by the ruling elites. In fact, the talk of the Malays' "blood-brother" relationship with Indonesia and the idea of a Greater Indonesia have gained new support among the Malays in recent years.

The willingness of the non-Malay communities to acquire a Malaysia-oriented outlook can be seen from their response to the changes that have taken place in the field of education. First, there was practically no disagreement among the Chinese and Indian communities that China-oriented or India-oriented textbooks be dis-

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<sup>34</sup>A sizable number of the Indian laborers in the rubber estates who had met the requirements for citizenship failed to apply for it after Merdeka. Their failure to do so may be due to their ignorance and political apathy rather than to the result of a conscious effort to remain aliens.



carded, teaching materials be Malayanized or Malaysianized, and a common syllabus for all schools be adopted. Chinese primary schools had, in fact, taken gradual steps to Malayanize their textbooks since the Emergency and well before a common syllabus was required by the government. Second, there was virtually no resistance among the non-Malays as regards the acceptance of the Malay language as bahasa kebangsaan (national language),<sup>35</sup> its adoption as a compulsory subject in all schools and the institution of a common examination. Genuine efforts have been taken since the independence of Malaya by Chinese schools, Chinese teachers' associations, the Chinese press, and other political and social organizations to encourage Chinese youths and adults to study Malay.<sup>36</sup>

All this does not mean, however, that the non-Malays have found nothing objectionable in the educational policy of the country. In fact, there has been bitter opposition to the ultimate goal of this policy among the non-Malays. As seen earlier in this study, the

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<sup>35</sup>Supra, 438, notes 20 and 21.

<sup>36</sup>Outside school hours, adult classes have been organized to facilitate teachers, students and working adults to study Malay. To encourage the use of Malay, public speech and essay competitions in Malay among Chinese students and youths have been held both locally and nationally every year. In the decade since Merdeka, the Chinese community has produced many outstanding writers in Malay literary circles. Commenting on the standard of Malay students in the use of Malay, the editorial of the Utusan Melayu wrote: "It would not be surprising to us if in the next decade lecturers in Malay and prominent writers in the Malay literary circles were non-Malays." Utusan Melayu, January 18, 1966.



ultimate objective of educational change in Malaysia is to achieve the Malayization of all non-Malay schools by requiring them to use Malay (now officially referred to as Bahasa Malaysia) as the main or sole medium of instruction. As a first step toward this goal, the Report of the Education Review Committee (the Talib Report) of 1960 required that all non-Malay schools be reorganized into "national-type schools", while only Malay schools were to be called "national schools". Except for primary schools where Chinese or Tamil might temporarily be used as the main medium of instruction, all national-type secondary schools must adopt either Malay or English as the main teaching medium. All common examinations administered by the government were to be written either in Malay or in English only. These changes were finalized in the 1961 Education Ordinance, which also empowered the Minister of Education to change the non-Malay national-type schools (both primary and secondary) into Malay schools "at the appropriate time".<sup>37</sup> Apparently, these changes have been directed to the ultimate elimination of Chinese and Tamil as a teaching medium in Malaysia. These measures have been the major targets of non-Malay protest and resentment.

Ever since the appearance of the Barnes Report on Education in 1951, a decade before the 1961 Ordinance was passed, the non-Malay communities have been pressing for official recognition of their right

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<sup>37</sup>Supra, 324-333.





to use their mother tongue in schools and a rightful place for their languages (Chinese and Tamil in particular) in the country, but these demands have never received any proper consideration from the ruling elites. Instead of making proper concessions to non-Malay language rights, since the latter part of the 1960's, the Malay-dominated Alliance has taken steps under the 1961 Ordinance to transform the English-medium national-type schools into Malay schools. In view of this change, the Chinese-medium and Tamil-medium national-type primary schools "are trembling with fear."<sup>38</sup> This indicates that while the non-Malays are willing to accept Malaysianization, they are not prepared to be Malayized.

In the immediate post-war years, China was still referred to by most of the Chinese and the Chinese press in Malaya as "our country" (wo-kuo) or "fatherland" (chu-kuo).<sup>39</sup> This practice was completely dropped after the Emergency was proclaimed. Since Merdeka in 1957, Malaya (and now Malaysia) has been referred to both by the Chinese press and in all Chinese public utterances not as "our second homeland" (ti-erh ku-hsiang) but simply as "our country" (wo-kuo). Similarly,

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<sup>38</sup>Protem Working Committee of Representatives of Chinese Associations and Guilds of Malaysia, A Memorandum to the Prime Minister for a Rightful Place of the Chinese Language (Kuala Lumpur: Asia Press, 1965), 3.

<sup>39</sup>One major exception was the practice of the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army and the Communists who chose to refer to Malaya as the "country of the three great races".



Kuala Lumpur has been referred to as shou-tu (capital), and the prime minister, as wo-kuo tsung-li (the prime minister of our country). The terms chung-kuo jen (literally, China men) and hua-ch'iao (overseas Chinese), which were formerly used by the Chinese in Malaya to identify themselves, had long been discarded both in writings and in daily conversations among the locally-born and Chinese-educated Chinese. Instead, they now identify themselves as hua-jen (the Hans) or hua-yi (descendants of the Hans), and as a group, they refer to themselves as hua-tzu (the Han nation or race).

These conceptual changes relating to the identity of the Chinese have taken place spontaneously and have been completely accepted by the Chinese community without trouble. In fact, the vast majority of Chinese school children between the ages of 7 and 13 can now readily tell an interviewer that they are Ma-lai-si-a hua-jen (Malaysian Hans) and their country is Malaysia. They can also name their prime minister correctly, while very few of them can identify the premier of China.<sup>40</sup> These changes indicate that the Chinese in Malaysia have stopped identifying themselves as Chinese (chung-kuo jen). Instead, they identify themselves as "Malaysian Hans". These are as significant and important as the change in which a citizen of British origin in Canada or Australia stops seeing himself as a British and begins to identify himself as a Canadian or Australian Anglo-Saxon. The Chinese in Malaysia

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<sup>40</sup>Interview with Mr. Sim Mow Yu, the President of the United Chinese School Teachers' Association of Malaysia, in May 1968.





belong to the Han race or nation but, unlike the Hans in China, they are no longer chung-kuo jen but Ma-lai-si-a hua-jen (Malaysian Hans), just as the Malays identify themselves as peninsular Malays rather than as Indonesians.

Chinese newspapers in Malaya (and now Malaysia) have performed a useful and effective role in the change of Chinese outlook in the country. Since the early 1950's, Chinese newspapers have taken the lead in identifying with the interests of the emerging Malayan nation. Full coverage has been given to local news, events, governmental policies, the activities of the various political parties, and other social activities. Although news about China has been reported, it has been treated as part of the international news coverage. The former practice of reporting the social activities of the home villages in China had long been discontinued. Editorial comments in Chinese news media, except those in Singapore after the separation, seldom touch upon events and issues concerning China. Thus, the whole atmosphere created by the Chinese press encourages the Chinese readers to identify with Malaysia and to see all problems and events from a Malaysian point of view.

Unlike the Malay press which writes and speaks for Malay special rights, none of the Chinese news media in today's Malaysia stands for the exclusive rights of the Chinese and the perpetuation of their China-oriented outlook. They all set out to encourage intercommunal harmony, tolerance, respect, understanding and equality.

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Social events such as intermarriage and Malay students studying in Chinese schools or vice versa, which have a significance in promoting racial understanding, have frequently been given wide publicity in the Chinese press. In short, the ideal state of communal relations in Malaysia projected by the Chinese press, which is bound to have a far-reaching influence on the outlook of the Chinese readers, is one in which everyone is politically equal with everyone else and the culture and heritage of each community is respected and accepted by all as part of the cultural treasure of the emerging Malaysian nation.

Furthermore, Chinese newspapers in Malaysia see themselves as being duty-bound, not only to cultivate racial goodwill and tolerance, but also to promote the standard of Malaysian Chinese culture. Each major Chinese newspaper, for example, reserves up to 14 full pages per week for Chinese students, and young and old Chinese writers to publish their works - some pages are open to literary writings from all walks of life, some are restricted to contributors from Chinese students, and others are devoted to publishing works on history, philosophy, social knowledge, scientific and medical knowledge, and other interests. To encourage the use of the national language, a full page per week is also offered by each major Chinese newspaper to publish literary works or translations written in Malay. All published works are paid for M\$4 per 1,000 Chinese characters

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for student contributors to M\$10 per 1,000 Chinese words for adult writers. These works are almost entirely Malaysia-oriented in their contents and ways of expression, and they form one of the main sources of mental food for the Chinese-educated hua-jen in Malaysia. As a result, they have been a major force for the Malaysianization of the outlook of the Chinese population.

The emergence of a body of Malaysian Chinese literature dealing with Malaysian life, values, hopes and aspirations is another example showing that Chinese culture has grown root in Malaysia and acquired a uniquely Malaysian character. Formerly, Chinese intellectuals tended to look upon the Nanyang areas as cultural desert and continued to look to China for cultural inspirations and experience. They also maintained that the writings of Chinese abroad, regardless of their subject-matters, were part of Chinese literature and should be identified with the interests of China. However, this so-called Overseas Chinese school of literature was completely defeated in a series of debates after 1945 by the Malay Chinese school of literature, which insisted that Chinese writers in Malaya should be part of their environment and that they should not engage in expatriate writings because their responsibility was to the land where they lived.<sup>41</sup> Today, a

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<sup>41</sup>See Fang Hsiu, ma-hua wen-hsueh shih-kao (Draft History of Malayan Chinese Literature), vol. 1, (Singapore: 1968); Miao Hsiu, ma-hua wen-hsueh shih-hua (History of Malayan Chinese Literature), (Singapore: 1968); and Yu Wang-lun, ma-hua wen-hsueh ti hsing-ch'eng yu fa-chan (The Rise and Development of Malayan Chinese Literature), (M.A. Thesis, University of Malaya, 1967). For a yearly review of





sizable body of Malaysian Chinese literature has been created, reflecting the reality of the Malaysian environment, dealing with Malaysian life experience and aspirations, and most importantly, stimulating and consolidating a Malaysian consciousness among the Chinese and the mutual harmony and understanding of the different communities. While this Malaysia-oriented Chinese literature is the direct result of increasing identification of the Chinese with Malaysia, it is a significant force which reinforces and consolidates the Malaysian outlook of the young Chinese-educated.

So far as the Chinese community is concerned, China is no longer the main source of "food for the mind."<sup>42</sup> In fact, virtually all printed materials from China are forbidden in Malaysia.<sup>43</sup> Hong Kong and Taipei are now the two major outside suppliers of Chinese reading materials, but very few books and periodicals imported from these two areas have any political contents. Popular among the Chinese readers are the sentimental love novels or fiction from Taiwan and the Robinhood-type historical fighting stories from Hong Kong.

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the development of Malayan Chinese literature, see Kuang Tze's yearly article in the New-Year Special Editions of the Sin Chew Jit Poh (1959- 1971).

<sup>42</sup>See James Joseph Dalton, "Overseas Chinese: Food for the Mind", Far Eastern Economic Review, June 4, 1970, 19-22.

<sup>43</sup>Printed materials in China are banned in Malaysia according not to their individual content but to their publishers. As very few publishing houses in China are not on the blacklist, the number of those books which are permitted to enter the country is also very limited.



For the English-educated Chinese, reading materials come either from local publishers or from Britain, America or Australia. Therefore, while the Chinese in Malaysia are subject to outside influence as is anyone else in an age of world communication and novel change, they are, to a larger extent, cut off from China, the homeland of their ancestors. They are now being molded and socialized directly by the Malaysian environment, and by what has been produced, written and said in Malaysia.

Both Chinese Mandarin and dialects spoken in Malaysia have now absorbed many new words and concepts that are entirely alien to the Chinese of Taiwan and Hong Kong. Malaysian students of Chinese origin abroad (the author being one of them) are often asked to pause in their conversations with students from either Taiwan or Hong Kong to interpret certain words and terms they have used and which have appeared unintelligible to their listeners. The reason for this is the fact that many Malay and English words and terms have so commonly been used among the Malaysian Chinese that they have not only become a part of Chinese vocabulary but have also practically replaced their Chinese counterparts in their daily conversations. For example, to-long (help), kahwin (marriage), mata (policeman), contract, office, taxi and so on are more often used by the Chinese in Malaysia than pan-man, chi-fen, tsin-tsa, ch'i-yeh, pang-kung-tin, and keh-tsa

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respectively.<sup>44</sup> This absorption of Malay and English words and concepts as parts of the Chinese language has given Chinese Mandarin and dialects spoken in Malaysia a certain character which is uniquely Malaysian<sup>45</sup> and permits the Malaysian Chinese to communicate more effectively not only with one another but also with the Malays and the Indians than with other hua-jen (Hans) who belong to other countries.

Similar trends can be found developing in the fields of

<sup>44</sup>The following are a few of the Malay words most commonly used by the Chinese in Malaysia in their daily conversations among themselves: anggar (estimate), anggar-anggar (be considerate), bagi (distribute), bahru (just or new), balak (balk), balek (repeat), bichara (court hearing), bau (smell), chelaka (accursed), gaduh (quarrel), gaji (salary), gila (mad), hakim (judge), hukum (penalty or punishment), janji (guarantee or agreement), laku (current or saleable), macham (like), masak (cook), mata-mata (policemen), mintu (request or beg), pakai (make use of), parang (long knife), patut (fair), pereksa (examine), tanjong (cape), tapi (but), sama (all together), sayang (love), senang (easy), suka (like, love, delight), tahan (endure), timbang (consider sympathetically), and tumpang (to lodge or to be a passenger free of charge). There are Chinese words for these expressions but they have now been replaced by these Malay words. Likewise, a large number of English words have now become parts of the Chinese language in Malaysia.

<sup>45</sup>Chinese dialects in Malaysia are so mixed up with Malay and English that they are uniquely Malaysian. For example, when a Chinese estate worker reports a strike action to his friends, he may have to use the following English and Malay words along with his own dialect or Mandarin spontaneously and naturally: estate, manager, contractor, office, coolies, summon, police, guarantee, janji, gaji, mata, bichara, hakim, hukum, etc.. To a Chinese in Taiwan or mainland China, a report which contains these key words cannot be completely understood.



Tamil education, Tamil newspapers, Tamil literature and the Tamil language in Malaysia. Although the Indian community as a whole is still more subject to the influence of India than the Chinese to China's because normal relations have been maintained between India and Malaysia, like the Chinese, the Indians are now an integral part of the Malaysian society and their identification with Malaysia has been increasing ever since the end of the Second World War.<sup>46</sup>

It is thus clear that the attachment of the non-Malay communities to Malaysia can hardly be questioned now. In terms of their economic stake in Malaysia, they have long been tied to the country and have become inseparable from the Malaysian economy. Most importantly, the attachment based on economic motivations is now being transformed into a Malaysian consciousness, an emotional attachment to everything that is Malaysian. Such a sentiment has been emerging, not only because of the permanent settlement of the non-Malay communities, the change of the political environment and the pressure of the Malay community, but also because of the fact that the vast majority of the non-Malay population has been willing to respond to these changes and take genuine steps to remold themselves and their children to become Malaysian citizens. Although there has been little

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<sup>46</sup> Before the Japanese occupation, all literary material published in Malayan Tamil newspapers was of Indian origin and newspapers' editors and personnel were employed from India. Now, "all published literature, whether in newspapers, magazines, or anthologies, is by Malayan writers." See Sinnappah Arasaratnam, *op. cit.*, 193. Three Tamil dailies are now published in Malaysia and run by Malaysian Tamils.



co-ordination among the Malaysianization efforts undertaken by each of the non-Malay groups ( the English-educated, the Chinese-educated, the Tamil-educated, etc.), they are all aimed at making changes in their communal outlook to fit the new political situation brought about by the attainment of independence of the country. In other words, in order that they can survive as cultural groups in a culturally diverse society, the non-Malays have shown their willingness and are prepared to go more than half of the way to meet their Malay citizens. Instead of resisting the pressure from the Malay community, the non-Malay communities have actually made numerous concessions to avoid open conflicts. Unlike language agitators in India or Ceylon, the non-Malays in Malaysia have never pressed their demands for language and cultural rights to a point where they would resort to violent means.

Since the breakaway of Singapore in 1965, non-Malay demands for equality and full acceptance have been intensified. This has been so, not because the non-Malays are reluctant to discard their attachment to the countries of their ancestors, but because their cultural values and heritage have been denied an opportunity to fertilize in Malaysian soil, while the pressure of Malayization has been building up. It was against this background that Lee Kuan Yew, the Prime Minister of Singapore, made the following remark on March 23, 1965:

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A large number of the Chinese and Indians and immigrant groups regard themselves as Malaysians and if Malay leaders support the concept of a multi-racial society as the only sensible way in which Malaysia could work, the only rational way in which we could hold these territories with diverse communities together, then the Malays would be thinking as Malaysians, sharing a common experience with Chinese and Indians and others in Malaysia and sharing a common response, feeling and thinking as one people although they may be different in racial origins or racial descent.<sup>47</sup>

On the basis of this study, it would seem that among the forces that stand in the way of Malaysia's advancement toward a Malaysian Malaysia, Malay communalism is the most formidable barrier. The problem of political integration in Malaysia has reached a crisis proportion, not because of any resistance to Malaysianization on the part of the non-Malays, but because the Malays, the politically dominant component of this communal society, have insisted on enforcing a policy of Malayization, a policy of building a Malay Malaysia rather than a Malaysian Malaysia.

Before the Second World War, Malay communalism found its expression in a number of Malay movements and organizations aimed at building Malaya as a land of the Malays or as a part of a Greater Indonesia.<sup>48</sup> It gained its momentum during the post-war anti-Malayan

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<sup>47</sup>Lee Kuan Yew, Malaysia: Age of Revolution, op. cit., 58.

<sup>48</sup>Supra, Chapter III.



Union agitation. The exhilarating victory of Malay communalism in this agitation laid down the framework of Malay supremacy as the national base of the Federation and established Malay political culture as the core-culture of the country. Although a large number of the non-Malays was accepted as citizens, the acceptance was granted on the assumption that the principle of Malay supremacy would continue to be respected. Malayan (or Malaysian) nationalism has been equated with Malay nationalism. As a result, Malaysianization has been equated with Malayization.

Like all Malay groups in the pre-war years, to establish a Malay Malaysia has been the ultimate goal of almost all the major Malay political groups ever since the end of the Second World War, although some have been more moderate in their approach than others. While the Malay ruling elites have often emphasized the importance of racial harmony and cooperation, they have also made it clear that the non-Malay communities will not be given a political status equal to the Malay unless the non-Malays have sufficiently assimilated to the Malay way of life. In other words, the Malays are to remain as being Malay, while the non-Malays are required to be transformed and accept Malayization through education, the adoption of Malay as Bahasa Malaysia, and the implementation of other political and cultural measures. The principle of Malay supremacy and the idea of a Malay Malaysia implied in the terms of 1957 have now been classified by

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the constitution of the country as "sensitive issues" which can no longer be questioned either inside or outside the parliament. As a matter of fact, past political events seem to demonstrate that the principle of Malay supremacy has become so deeply rooted in Malay political culture that the Malays can hardly tolerate any serious attempt to change the status quo.<sup>49</sup>

A combination of a number of factors seems to account for the persistent unwillingness of the Malay community to accept a Malaysian-Malaysia solution to the problem of nation-building in Malaysia. First, it will be recalled, Malaya (and now Malaysia) has long been regarded by the Malays as a Malay country. This belief had, in the past, been reinforced by British policy, the pan-Islamic movement, the drive for a Melayu Raya, the Japanese occupation, the victory of the Malay community in the anti-Malayan Union campaign and other post-war political changes. As a result, the Chinese and the Indians are

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<sup>49</sup>The eviction of Singapore in 1965, the hostile reaction of the Malay press and the Malay community as a whole toward the concept of a Malaysian Malaysia, the 1969 racial riots and the campaign to overthrow Tunku Abdul Rahman were a few of the major indications of this rigid attitude. What is important is the fact that such an attitude is widely held among Malay students, the potential future leaders of the Malay community. For example, in July 1969, the leaders of the National Union of Muslim Students, the National Union of Malaysian Students and the MARA Institute of Technology Students' Union, who claimed to represent 25,000 Malay students, declared in an interview with 4 foreign correspondents that the only condition on which they would allow the Chinese to remain in Malaysia was under a one-race government with all power and privileges in Malay hands. They demanded that Chinese citizenship and voting right be deprived off. They said, if the Chinese resisted, the only alternative was all-out racial war. Reuter report: Kuala Lumpur, July 20, 1969; as reported in John Slimming, Malaysia: Death of a Democracy (London: John Murray, 1969), 71.



felt to be alien intruders who could be legitimately expelled.

Secondly, Merdeka (Independence) did not bring much change in the outlook of the Malay community. While the socialization process of the non-Malay communities has been undergoing gradual readjustment to suit the new situation in an independent country, the Malay community as a whole has never been resocialized to look upon Malaysia as a multiracial, multicultural and multilingual country which belongs not only to the Malays but also to other races as well. "At the local level", Marvin L. Rogers observes, "Malay nationalism is in fact communal-nationalism in which the villagers identify with other Malays and with the territory of Malaya, but not with other ethnic groups."<sup>50</sup> In Malay schools and Malay-Muslim institutions, Malay students and youths have been taught to love and defend Malaysia as a Malay-Muslim country. "When I was in school", one Malay reader wrote in the Utusan Zaman, "my teacher taught me to be a fanatic with regard to my homeland, race, language and religion."<sup>51</sup> As the Malays believe that they were defending their birthrights as the sons of the soil in their homeland, they argue that their action and

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<sup>50</sup> Marvin L. Rogers, "Politicization and Political Development in a Rural Malay Community", Asian Survey, 9, 12 (December 1969), 924. For a longer study by the same author, see his Political Involvement in a Rural Malay Community (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1968).

<sup>51</sup> Pak Awang in the Utusan Zaman (the Sunday's version of the Utusan Melayu), December 19, 1965.





drive to promote their special position, their language, and their culture cannot be regarded as communal and extreme. On the contrary, they feel that it is the efforts of the Chinese and Indian intruders to promote their cultures and interests in Malaysia that are really communal.<sup>52</sup> They also hold that as the rightful owners of the country, they have already made great sacrifices by allowing the Chinese and the Indians to settle in the country and acquire citizenship. As a result, the Malays tend to look upon any non-Malay demand for the preservation of their languages and cultures as an "ungrateful" and "provocative" act.<sup>53</sup> "Let the Chinese ... look for a while beyond Malaysia's frontiers", the Utusan Zaman warned in 1966. "There are many countries in Asia which totally ban the use of foreign languages and many foreigners for refusing to accept reality."<sup>54</sup> When asked what lessons they had learned from the May riots in 1969, a group of young Malays said: "Lessons learned? We've taught the Chinese a

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<sup>52</sup>"Unless we [the Malays] go to other people's countries like China, India or countries in Europe and talk of our own interest, we cannot be regarded as communal. If we fight for the language of the indigenous people to be made the national language in our own country, we cannot be regarded as extremists or ultras. Unless we want to spread our language in other people's countries where we live as a community, we cannot be regarded as extremists, fanatics and ultras. Unless we want to do trade and business in other people's countries, where we exploit the natives and suppress their businesses and industries, we cannot be regarded as Malay capitalists." Pak Awang in Utusan Zaman, December 19, 1965.

<sup>53</sup>Statement by Tuan Syed Nasir bin Ismail. The Straits Times, November 13, 1964.

<sup>54</sup>Utusan Zaman, October 9, 1966. See supra, 405.





lesson. And the Indians too. If they need to be taught another lesson we'll do it again!"<sup>55</sup>

Thirdly, post-war constitutional changes, the double-standard style of Alliance's politics, the official effort to promote Islam as the State Religion, the division of the population into the bumiputra and the non-bumiputra purely on the basis of racial origin, the adoption of a unilingual policy, and the increasing emphasis placed upon communal factors as criteria of allocating political, economic, educational and commercial advantages among the population, all serve to reinforce the Malay belief that the Malay community is the core-unit and its culture is the core-culture of the emerging "Malaysian" nation. As the idea of a Malaysian Malaysia is committed to the abolition of the communal distinctions among the various groups and the equalization of status among all citizens regardless of communal identity, it is thus seen by the Malays as a challenge to their supremacy as the rightful owners of the country. Moreover, as most of the Malays still identify the Chinese as the capitalists and exploiters, it is also believed that the only groups which stand to gain from the establishment of a non-communal Malaysia are the non-Malays, because while political power can be transferred to the non-Malays by the stroke of a pen, the Malay masses would have

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<sup>55</sup>See John Slimming, op. cit., 78.



to take generations to catch up with the non-Malays in the economic fields.

Consequently, the vast majority of the Malays tends to look upon "Malaysian Malaysia" as a communal attempt of the non-Malays through allegedly non-communal means to "dispose of four things which still belong to the Malays: the Rulers, Islam as the State Religion, the Malay language, and Malay special rights."<sup>56</sup> In order that "they will not become people like the Maoris in New Zealand, the natives in Australia, the Red Indians in America, or the Arabs in Palestine",<sup>57</sup> the Malay masses have been urged by their elites and most of the Malay press to adhere firmly to the principle of Malay supremacy and Malay special rights, and oppose any attempt at creating a Malaysian Malaysia. Such a view is certainly a distortion of the meaning of a non-communal Malaysia; but it is undeniable that there has been created among the Malay population a social atmosphere (which is reinforced by actual economic disparities between the Malays and the non-Malays) in which the Malay community is being seen as having suffered injustice and severe deprivations at the hands of non-Malay capitalists and being now under the threat of being dominated by the non-Malay communities.

Unlike the non-Malays who, while demanding that their language and cultural rights be given recognition, have never made any

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<sup>56</sup>Dato' Syed Ja'afar Albar's statement. Utusan Melayu, July 9, 1965.

<sup>57</sup>Utusan Zaman, September 5, 1965.





attempt to deny a rightful place to the Malay language, Malay culture and the Malay claim for special treatment in certain specific fields, the Malays have so far shown little empathy for the non-Malay position, insisting not only upon the rapid advancement of their rights and interests as a community in Malaysia but also upon the extension of their community to become the national community into which all non-Malay groups are to be absorbed in the long run. Malay political culture is thus both rigid and exclusive.

Another important force behind the drive to make Malaysia a Malay country comes from the established and potential elites of the Malay community. In the colonial era, it will be recalled, the Malay aristocratic and English-educated elites had been given a definite share of political and administrative power by the British due to the fact that the latter had recognized that Malaya was primarily a land of the Malays. This tradition was legitimized in the Federation of Malaya Agreement of 1948 and other post-war constitution-making and finally became a part of the so-called "racial bargain" in 1957. Although free elections were introduced before independence, about 90 percent of the electorate were Malays in the 1955 elections. At present, the percentage of Malay votes in West Malaysia is still proportionally higher than the percentage of Malay population in the peninsula because almost all Malays are qualified voters whereas not all non-Malays are citizens because only the second-generation non-

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Malays of local-birth can acquire automatic citizenship.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, rural electoral constituencies are over-represented in the Dewan Ra'ayat - in some areas, a rural vote is worth as much as four to seven urban votes.<sup>59</sup> As the rural population is predominantly Malay, the greater weight given to the rural votes serves to strengthen and perpetuate Malay political power and makes the Malay elites far more responsive to the Malay electorate than to the non-Malay.

The Malay royalties and the Malay established elites in government, the public services, police and armed forces, and the emerging new industries, no longer owe their social status, living standard and sense of importance and influence to any outside power but to the established political order which upholds Malay political supremacy, cultural dominance and special position. In other words, the principle of Malay supremacy and the system of special privileges have already created a center of vested interests within the Malay community. Those Malay elites who have benefited, or are aspiring to benefit, from the established political order, have so great a stake in maintaining and perpetuating Malay political dominance that they tend to reject any change that would adversely affect the status of the Malay community as a model of nation-building in Malaysia.

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<sup>58</sup> Supra, 291-298, 333-335. The percentage of Malay voters in the total electorate in Malaya in 1955, 1959, 1964, and 1969 is as follows: 84.2%, 56.2%, 54.1%, and 56%, while the Malays constitute slightly less than 50% of the peninsula's total population.

<sup>59</sup> Supra, 373. In the 1969 elections, both the Alliance and the PIMP failed to win any seat from constituencies each of which had an electorate of 40,000 or over.



While the vernacular-educated Malay elites had been unable to attract a substantial following among the Malay masses in the pre-war years, they have now emerged as the only rival force that the English-educated Malay elites have to accommodate in order to remain in power. Although the vernacular-educated Malay elites and youths have, as a whole, benefited from the established constitutional order through the allocation of licences, scholarships, and posts in the public services, they are profoundly dissatisfied with the pace of Malay economic advancement and the speed with which Malayization has been carried out in the fields of language, education, governmental administration, commerce and industry.<sup>60</sup> It is true that the English-educated Malay elites, who have maintained certain contacts with a portion of the non-Malay elites, are, as a whole, more pragmatic and tend to favor a gradual approach to the problem of Malayization; but they are facing a prospect of being replaced by the vernacular-educated Malay elites because Malay has now gradually replaced English as the dominant language in the country. The vernacular-educated Malay elites have maintained little contact with non-Malay elites and tend to favor the use of more radical measures to bring about economic and cultural changes favorable

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<sup>60</sup>The smashing of English and Chinese signboards and the recurrent outbreaks of Malay students' unrest in the University of Malaya, the Muslim College, and the MARA Institute of Technology are some good indicators of this mood. Most recently, 1,000 Malay students in the University of Malaya launched a campaign to smash English-language signs and notices on the campus. *Supra*, 330-331, notes 72-73.





to the Malay community. At present, the trend is for the English-educated Malay elites to come to terms with the more radical wing of the Malay community so that they may be able to wield whatever power they have already possessed. It should be pointed out, however, that despite their differences, both groups of Malay elites are mostly the staunch supporters of a Malay Malaysia, because, as the elite group of the Malay community, they are the first among the Malay population to stand to gain not only from the status quo but also from any change that would successfully bring about rapid Malayization.

It is clear that the task of nation-building in Malaysia lies in finding a solution to a fundamental conflict between the Malay community on the one hand and the non-Malay communities on the other. This conflict arises from two opposite demands: the Malay demands for political supremacy, cultural assimilation, and a monocultural and monolingual nation based on Malay-Muslim cultural patterns, and the non-Malay demands for political equality, cultural pluralism, and a multiracial, multicultural and multilingual nation of which every community is an equal partner. These two opposite demands are the products of two different conceptions of vertical identification with the Malaysian polity. The non-Malays have identified with Malaysia as a Malaysian Malaysia, whereas the Malays have identified with it as a Malay country. To build a Malaysian Malaysia, all communal orientations need to be readjusted to suit the realities of a multi-

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racial, multicultural and multilingual society.

### Toward a Malaysian Malaysia

Undoubtedly, Malaysia is facing an integrative crisis of the first magnitude. On the one hand, the Malay community has been so deeply committed to the idea of a Malay Malaysia, and its political culture is so rigid and exclusive, that it tends to see the non-Malays as "aliens", and any non-Malay opposition to the principle of Malay supremacy as an attempt to deprive the Malays of their birth-rights and a menace to the survival of the Malay race in its "homeland". This outlook is also reinforced by the concentration of the Malay population in the rural areas, their economic role and their Malay-Muslim way of life. On the other hand, the non-Malay communities feel that they have been treated unfairly by the Malays because they are still denied an equal status with the Malays although they think that they are as attached and loyal to Malaysia as the Malays. They have shown their willingness to become Malaysians but they are opposed to the attempt to make them Malays.

Given the numerical power of each of the communities in Malaysia, a deadlock should have resulted from this difference of attitudes; but, in actual fact, the Malay elites have been able to put their demands into practice because they have had and still have a preponderant control of both political and military power of the

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political system.

It is true that the non-Malays (the Chinese in particular) have had and still have a greater share of the economic power of the country; but it should be pointed out that Malaysia is one of the places where wealth and political power do not go hand in hand. Despite the recurrent cry of the Malay community that political power, unlike economic power which takes generations to transfer, "needs but the stroke of a pen to end",<sup>61</sup> it has been shown in many countries in Southeast Asia that it is not economic power but political power that is the more difficult to break.<sup>62</sup> In 1953, Tan Cheng Lock reminded the Chinese that they should not be concerned with making money alone. He warned that

you want that money to be protected.  
You can only do this if you have  
your share of political power. We  
do not want to monopolize power. But  
we must have our share. Without that  
our economic position may be threatened one day.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>See Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamed, "Pauper in Power", Opinion, 1, 6 (January 30-February 20, 1968), 71.

<sup>62</sup>Chinese in many Southeast Asian countries have become victims of post-independence nationalism, political suspicion and economic jealousy. In the Philippines, South Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand, they are barred from a long list of trades and professions. In 1959, Indonesia barred alien Chinese from retail trade in rural areas and closed all Chinese newspapers. In these countries, it is virtually impossible for Chinese aliens to own land. Many rich Chinese businessmen have to resort to bribery for their own protection. See Alice Erh Soon Tay, "The Chinese in Southeast Asia", Race, 4, 1 (November 1962), 34-48.

<sup>63</sup>The Straits Times, July 13, 1953, 7.



The lack of political influence thus gives rise to a profound sense of insecurity among the non-Malays, which, in turn, produces an intense desire to rectify a situation which is seen as being unjust to them.

On the other hand, seeing themselves as the sons of the soil, the Malays feel that political supremacy is a part of their natural rights and it is legitimate for them to insist that Malay culture and political norms be adopted as the model of the Malaysian nation. Due to its political dominance, the Malay community has been able to reassert itself whenever its supremacy is openly questioned by non-Malay organizations or opposition political parties. The practice of detaining political opponents, the threat of using violence and the actual outbreak of racial riots in 1969 in which Malay soldiers and police were charged by the non-Malays of failing to maintain impartiality, might have already convinced an increasing number of the non-Malay citizens that the only thing they could do would be either to resign themselves to their fate or to resist Malayization. This belief might have been reinforced by the official ban on the public questioning of "sensitive issues" (i.e., matters relating to Malay special position, the status of the rulers, the primacy of Bahasa Malaysia, Islam as the State Religion and citizenship)<sup>64</sup> and

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<sup>64</sup>This ban has been written in the constitution in March 1971. It is noteworthy that in all official pronouncements Malay is no longer referred to as Bahasa Kebangsaan (National Language) but as Bahasa Malaysia (Malaysian Language or Language of Malaysia). This change seems to imply that other languages are alien languages. Supra, 321.





the official proclamation of the Rukunegara (National Ideology) which failed to mention the language and cultural rights of the non-Malays and the fact that Malaysia is a multiracial country.<sup>65</sup>

At first glance, it appears that Malayization might be able to result in success in the long run if the Malay-dominated government were able to continue to keep non-Malay resistance and Malay impatience in check and, at the same time, to maintain a high level of output performance.<sup>66</sup> However, a closer look would reveal

<sup>65</sup>The Rukunegara embodies five beliefs - a united nation, a democratic, a just, a liberal and a progressive society - and five principles - belief in God, loyalty to king and country, upholding the constitution, the rule of law, and good behavior and morality. See James Morgan, "Malaysia: Tying up the Ends", Far Eastern Economic Review, September 12, 1970. Very few of these beliefs and principles have a direct bearing on non-Malay demands for political equality and cultural full acceptance. The Rukunegara was formulated by the National Consultative Committee which "usually takes its cue from the NOC (National Operations Council)", and from which the Democratic Action Party was excluded. See James Morgan, "A Ban on the Ban?", Far Eastern Economic Review, August 27, 1970, 8. For a discussion of the Rukunegara and its possible role, see R. S. Milne, "'National Ideology' and Nation-Building in Malaysia", Asian Survey, 10, 7 (July 1970), 563-573. Milne's article was written before the Rukunegara was fully formulated.

<sup>66</sup>Tunku Abdul Rahman (the former Prime Minister) and Dato' Dr. Ismail (the present Deputy Prime Minister) seem to have adhered to this view. Both of them placed great emphasis on the importance of maintaining economic prosperity and racial harmony as the first step of nation-building "leading to the ultimate stage of non-communal Malaysian Malaysia", which they identified as what "was spelled out in the Constitution". See Dato' Dr. Ismail bin Dato' Abdul Rahman, Alliance Malaysian Malaysia in Two Stages (Kuala Lumpur: Federal Department of Information, 1965?), 5-6; and idem, Inter-Racial Harmony (Kuala Lumpur: Federal Department of Information, 1965), 1. For Tunku Abdul Rahman's view, see his May 13: Before





that the practicability of such an assumption is quite questionable.

Is it likely that non-Malay dissatisfaction can be kept in check while a policy directed toward the building of a Malay Malaysia is being pursued? To minimize non-Malay resistance calls for genuine accommodation to non-Malay interests. Undoubtedly, this cannot be done without arousing Malay resentment, as it limits the responsiveness of the governments to Malay communal demands. On the other hand, in order that Malay impatience can be reduced to a point where the Malays would not, to use Tunku Abdul Rahman's words, "decide to turn everything upside down", a greater responsiveness to Malay pressure is required. But, again, this cannot be done without creating fear and resentment among the non-Malays. Finally, if a high level of output performance is to be maintained, ascriptive considerations should be replaced by rational criteria in decision-making and the allocation of political, economic and administrative resources, and traditional values and outlook should be reshaped to conform to the developing economy and industrialization. Here, the same conflict arises. Bumiputraism requires a greater priority to racial

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and After (Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Melayu Press Ltd., 1969), 144ff. The Tunku assured the Malays that Malaysia would forever remain a Malay country so long as they remained patient and did not "decide to turn everything upside down" (*ibid.*, 147) because they had already obtained what they wanted in the constitution. As expressed in the constitutional amendments in March 1971, the new Razak government seems to have followed the same policy with a greater determination to put Malay supremacy beyond challenge.



rather than achievement- and problem-oriented considerations in the authoritative allocation of values in Malaysia and a greater emphasis on the symbolic display of Malay-Muslim culture and religion. But such priority and emphasis not only adversely affect the level of output performance but also limit the government's responsiveness to non-Malay demands for cultural and political equality. In short, on all major issues, Malay and non-Malay demands are so diametrically opposed that a favorable response of the government to either one of them is likely to stir up resentment and opposition from the other.

It is thus the contention of this thesis that so long as the Malaysian government adopts the policy of building a Malay Malaysia, it makes little sense to talk about "accommodation" as the first stage in the process of Malayization. The reason for this is that Malayization is directly opposed to the principle of intercommunal accommodation and mutual respect of social, cultural and racial differences. Although, for expediency, limited accommodation of non-Malay aspirations may be practised if it does not adversely affect the overall goal of creating a Malay nation, in the final analysis, Malayization (i.e., assimilation) and accommodation (which emphasizes acculturation) are two incompatible objectives -- both are mutually exclusive and cannot be pursued simultaneously. It is thus questionable that "accommodation in the short run" can be used as a means to

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achieve "assimilation in the long run" in the Malaysian situation.

As seen earlier in this study, the incompatibility between accommodation and assimilation gave birth to the double-standard approach of the Alliance government (i.e., pursuing the policy of building a Malay Malaysia while assuring the non-Malay communities that the aim of that policy was nothing other than to achieve racial harmony and mutual respect for all) in the past fifteen years.<sup>67</sup> It is also because of this incompatibility that the Malay-dominated government has found it necessary first to discourage, and now totally ban, public discussions of communal issues and Malay special position. In theory, these tactics are said to be designed to ensure racial harmony and peace; but in practice, they work to create a wider gap between the Malays and the non-Malays by reinforcing bumiputeraism and the belief in Malay supremacy among the former while the actual attempt to Malayize non-Malay cultures is presented to the latter under the cloak of Malayization or Malaysianization. On the one hand, the Malays have been encouraged to remain Malay and to regard themselves as the rightful owners of the country. Consequently, Malay impatience and chauvinistic sentiments develop rapidly. On the other, non-Malays' dissatisfaction and resentment grow because their increasing identification with Malaysia as a multiracial and multicultural country comes into conflict with the reality of Malay political domination and the

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<sup>67</sup>Supra, 400-407.



cultural policy of Malayization. The display of non-Malay discontent in Lee Kuan Yew's campaign for a Malaysian Malaysia and the subsequent growth of pro-Malaysian-Malaysia forces stimulates the vigorous and aggressive assertion of Malay rights and chauvinistic claims among the Malays.

It is thus clear that the tactic of building a Malay Malaysia through "accommodation in the short run" pleases very few Malays and non-Malays. It tends to build up Malays' impatience. As this impatience is being built up, the Malay-dominated government cannot but respond to this "jingoistic majority" by gradually abandoning the policy of accommodation in the short run in favor of rapid Malayization. This has been the major trend since the separation of Singapore in 1965. Such a development is bound to generate fear and distrust of the non-Malays in the government and the Malays. It is not surprising to learn that one of the lessons that the Chinese youths had learned from the communal bloodshed in 1969 was that they "can never again trust the Malays - not even the urban Malays whom [they] know."<sup>68</sup>

An alternative to the tactic of building a Malay Malaysia through accommodation in the short run is the ruthless adoption of a policy of outright assimilation and complete Malay domination as it

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<sup>68</sup>John Slimming, op. cit., 78.



was suggested by Malay students' leaders in July 1969.<sup>69</sup> Such a policy might satisfy the chauvinistic sentiment of the Malays but it is bound to meet with a greater and more bitter resistance by the non-Malay communities. It was to minimize the intensity of non-Malay opposition that the moderate wing of the UMNO saw the need to emphasize the importance of a gradual approach to bring about a Malay Malaysia. However, it is often forgotten that both gradual and outright assimilation are bound to produce the same reaction from the non-Malay communities because Malayization has limited utilitarian and identitive appeal to them and Malay-Muslim culture itself is formally very restrictive in laying down conditions for admission to its community.<sup>70</sup> The number of the non-Malays and their pride in their cultural heritages add strength to their resistance to Malayization.

"It is impossible for me to become a Malay", Lee Kuan Yew declared in 1965 before Singapore's secession. He added, "if anybody wants to turn me into something that I cannot be turned into, I simply have to resist. What can I do? But I can be a Malaysian."<sup>71</sup> As early as 1934, Tan Cheng Lock reached the same conclusion when he declared that

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<sup>69</sup>Supra, 531, note 49.

<sup>70</sup>Supra, 431-447.

<sup>71</sup>Lee Kuan Yew, The Battle for a Malaysian Malaysia (2), op. cit., 52, 53.





I hope and presume that the term 'Malayanization' does not at all imply that the Government has the least intention in view, however remote, ultimately to attempt the mixing ethnologically of the various races living in Malaya, so that the product of this race mixture will be a homogeneous amalgamation of the component races in whom the Malay characteristics will predominate, or to make non-Malays adopt the Malay language as their own and assimilate the so-called Malay civilization and culture. If there is any suspicion that such an attempt is going to be made, it would be most energetically resisted by the non-Malays as something most obnoxious and baneful to their well-being and would be fore-doomed to failure.<sup>72</sup>

However, Tan Cheng Lock suggested

If, on the other hand, by Malayanization Government desires to foster and create a truly Malayan spirit and consciousness and a unity of outlook among the various racial elements composing the permanent population of this country, who, while enjoying a common citizenship, will preserve their racial individuality ... then the Government will confer an inestimable boon on this country and its people.<sup>73</sup>

Tan's observation was indeed prophetic of today's situation in Malaysia. The non-Malays cannot be turned into Malays but they can become

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<sup>72</sup>Tan Cheng Lock's speech at the Legislative Council held at Malacca on February 12, 1934. See his Malayan Problems from a Chinese Point of View (Singapore: Tanmsco, 1947), 96.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., 96-97.



Malaysians. Similarly, no Malay can be turned into a Chinese or an Indian; but he can become a Malaysian while retaining his Malay-Muslim individuality. In order that Malaysia will embark on the road toward national unity, there is no other way except the building of a Malaysian Malaysia. Every community would stand to gain in the long run if it could agree that genuine Malaysianization be implemented and Malayization be discarded.

As seen earlier, during the last two decades or so, the non-Malay population has been subject to a process of resocialization through schools, mass media, and political mobilization by the government and political parties to become Malaysians or Malaysians and to be loyal to the country. They have shown their willingness to dissociate with the homelands of their ancestors and to acquire a Malaysian identity. Non-Malay frustration and resentment arise not because they are not willing to become Malaysians but because they have been assigned a second-class citizen status and their languages and cultures have been denied a place in Malaysia simply due to the fact that they are not Malay. One Chinese intellectual complained to the author in 1968: "We may stand on top of the mountain and shout loudly that we love Malaysia, and are loyal to Malaysia and prepared to die for her; but what is the use? The Malays will not believe us. You would stand a better chance to be accepted by them if you were to wear a songkok (cap worn by Malay-Muslims) and

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undergo bersunat (circumcision) by a mudim." "Nowadays in Malaysia", an Indian doctor sighed in answering a question on education from the author in 1968, "a songkok may worth more than a square cap from the university." These statements reveal a deep sense of frustration and resentment, which is prevalent among the non-Malay population, whose major concern is complete acceptance on the basis of equality by the Malay community. Under such circumstances, the adoption of the policy of building a non-communal Malaysia would be welcomed by the non-Malay communities. It would also accelerate the growth of a Malaysian consciousness and strengthen emotional attachment to Malaysia among them.

To build a Malaysian Malaysia, both the Malays and the non-Malays need to be persuaded to accept the principle of racial equality and to consciously undergo a mental reorientation to feel, act and think as Malaysians. Embodied in the principle of racial equality are five political fundamentals on which a common orientation toward Malaysia and one's fellow-citizens can be built. First, the fact that Malaysia is a multiracial country should be accepted by all as the basis of Malaysian nationhood. Second, the emerging Malaysian culture should not be identified with the culture of any particular community but as the synthesis of all that is to evolve from a free interplay and interpenetration of the cultures in Malaysia. Third, all the languages spoken by Malaysians of different racial origin are

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Malaysian languages, each of which should be accepted as part of the Malaysian linguistic system. The acceptance of the principles of multiracialism, multiculturalism and multilingualism is fundamental because it signifies the complete acceptance of all who are Malaysian citizens regardless of their racial origin, culture and language. Fourth, the principle of equality should be adhered to in the authoritative allocation of political resources. Racial considerations should cease to be the criteria of receiving political advantages or disadvantages. Finally, genuine efforts should be made to fill the gaps between the poor and the rich and between the rural sector and the urban sector. The redistribution of wealth should be made on the basis of economic needs rather than racial factors.

The process of political integration in Malaysia is the development of a broad consensus on the above five political fundamentals among the different communities. To build a Malaysian Malaysia, respect for cultural differences and the principle of racial equality should be made one of the fundamental commitments of all communities. This is undoubtedly a difficult task but unlike Malayization, it is one which offers the prospect of bringing about a united Malaysia in the long run.

As shown earlier, among the forces which stand in the way of Malaysia's development toward a Malaysian Malaysia, Malay communalism is, perhaps, the most formidable barrier. To establish a Malay-

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sian Malaysia calls for a fundamental change in the outlook of the Malay community regarding the status of the Malay race in Malaysia and the nature of the emerging Malaysian nation. Like the non-Malays, the Malays should be subject to the same process of resocialization so that they can be reoriented to regard Malaysia not as a Malay country but as a multiracial, multicultural and multilingual nation in which every citizen is a bumiputra irrespective of his or her racial origin. A feeling of empathy should also be inculcated in the mind of the Malays so that they will fight not only for their own political and cultural rights but also for those of the non-Malays as well. Instead of looking upon non-Malays as aliens and their cultures as foreign cultures, the Malays should learn to be proud of the fact that many different races and cultures have flourished in the Malaysian soil and have now become integral parts of the emerging Malaysian nation and culture. In short, the Malay community should be resocialized to realize that no racial group in Malaysia should equate its racial identity with that of the Malaysian political community, because every racial group is nothing more than one single component element of the whole multiracial and multicultural community of Malaysia. Membership in any particular racial group does not automatically entitle one to become a member of the Malaysian community.<sup>74</sup> To be-

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<sup>74</sup> Here lies the difference between "race" and "nation". As pointed out by the former Secretary-General of the Democratic Action Party, Mr. Goh Hock Guan, "Nation designates social, environmental and





come a member, one has to acquire the political identity as a Malaysian. It is this common sense of identification with Malaysia rather than the identity of a particular racial group that will legitimize the activities of political leaders of whatever racial origin and make it possible for them to mobilize the commitment and support of their followers in a Malaysian Malaysia.<sup>75</sup> Can the Malay community be convinced to accept these changes which involve a fundamental shift in its long-standing belief in Malay supremacy?

While there is reason, as noted earlier, to believe that the non-Malays will heartily welcome any effort to bring about a Malaysian Malaysia, the same cannot be said of the Malays. First, as seen in the preceding section, the belief that Malaysia is a Malay country has been so deeply rooted in Malay political culture that the Malays may find it extremely hard to accept the concept of a Malaysia in which every community is equal. Second, Malay political dominance has been well entrenched and protected by the established political order. Those Malay elites, who have benefited, or are

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historical characteristics which can be altered by society in the direction it considers desirable or ideal. Race refers to hereditary biological traits not easily changeable by education or even assimilation. There never has been a Canadian, an Australian or an American race. But there are Canadian, Australian and American nations. This is the fundamental point. A nation is not the physical fact of one blood, but the mental fact of one common experience and aspirations. The one is a common physical type; the other is a common mental outlook." See his "Is Malaysia a Race or a Nation?", The Rocket, 2, 3 (March 1967), 1.

<sup>75</sup>Supra, 17-18.



expecting to benefit, from the status quo, have already formed a center of vested interests which tends to resist any change that will affect the supremacy of the Malay community. Third, the meaning of a Malaysian Malaysia has been so distorted by Malay politicians and journalists that it is being taken by many Malays as a device of the non-Malays to perpetuate non-Malay economic domination and to reduce the Malays to people like the Red Indians in North America. The fact that the Malaysian government has been prone to label Chinese dissenters as Communists or Mao Tsetung's agents has also accentuated the feeling of distrust among the Malay population in their fellow non-Malays. These are, indeed, formidable obstacles.

The first and the last barriers listed above may be overcome by introducing a program of resocialization aimed at building a broad consensus on the five political fundamentals and by reorienting the schools, religious institutions, communal organizations, mass media, and political parties to undertake this resocialization task. But, it should be pointed out that as in other developing countries, the leading factor of political, social and cultural change in Malaysia lies in the commitment and initiative of the elite group. Therefore, unless the Malay elites who hold actual political power are committed to the cause of a Malaysian Malaysia, it seems unlikely that such a resocialization program would actually be adopted in the

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country.

The situation is not completely hopeless, however. On the one hand, the impracticability of cultural assimilation in Malaysia and the political instability and racial unrest that any attempt at complete Malay domination would produce<sup>76</sup> may eventually convince more and more Malay elites of the superiority of a Malaysian-Malaysia solution. The alternative to a Malaysian Malaysia would be a communal Malaysia dominated by one communal group, which might very well lead to either totalitarian rule, chaos, civil war, or domination by Indonesia or other powers. If this were to happen, everyone in Malaysia would stand to lose. The awareness of this possible outcome and the futility of cultural assimilation might eventually lead and motivate more Malay elites in the country to support the approach of acculturation and the drive toward a Malaysian Malaysia.

On the other hand, it should be remembered that the concept of a Malaysian Malaysia does not deny the need to give special attention to the economic, political and social uplift of the Malays and the natives in East and West Malaysia. It is true that the concept of a Malaysian Malaysia is opposed to the establishment of special privileges on the basis of racial origin; but it insists that

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<sup>76</sup> While racial violence in 1969 was mainly the result of racial distrust accentuated by the effort to build a Malay Malaysia, its aftermath saw the intensification of Communist guerrilla activities in Northern Malaya. Supra, 417, 452-456.



the poor and backward sectors of the Malaysian society as a whole be provided with special protection based on common economic needs. It holds that output performance of the political system should respond to the underprivileged as a whole but not to the underprivileged of one particular community alone. Furthermore, although the urban-rural gap coincides with racial lines, it is not communal differences but economic factors that are the basic cause of the urban-rural discrepancy. Therefore, the uplift of the poor and the backward sectors of the Malaysian society is essentially an economic and administrative problem and should be treated as such in finding a solution to it. A Malaysian-Malaysia approach to the problem of wealth distribution can thus help to create a sense of national unity because, as pointed out by Lee Kuan Yew, "the Chinese bus driver has more in common with the Malay bus driver than with the Chinese bus owner."<sup>77</sup>

Meanwhile, the principle of racial equality requires that multiculturalism and multilingualism be accepted by all as two of the political fundamentals. To build a Malaysian Malaysia, the preservation and development of the language and culture of one community is as important as the preservation and development of those of any other community so that no one needs to fear the loss of his cultural heritage, values and traditions as well as religion. While all

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<sup>77</sup>The Sunday Times (Singapore), November 15, 1964. Lee added: "This is the philosophy which I have sought to preach. My problem is that there are other political forces in the country that either don't accept this particular form of political division of loyalties, or who otherwise find it easier to make an appeal on the basis of primeval emotion - one people, one language, one culture."



major languages - Malay, Chinese, Tamil, English and the main native languages in East Malaysia - are to be recognized as official languages, the Malay language is to continue to serve as the national language. It is to be given this status not because it is spoken by the Malays but because it is the most convenient vehicle of intercommunal communication and thus the most convenient instrument for the promotion of intercommunal understanding and unity. To ensure that it would be widely used, Malay should be made a compulsory subject in all schools and proficiency in it be made a compulsory requirement for admission to public services. As to the principle of political parity, a special formula, which is discussed below, may be arranged to ensure that none of the communities in Malaysia would be able to obtain more than its share of political power without the support of most of the Malaysians as a whole.

It is thus clear that the idea of a Malaysian Malaysia is by no means a device for the non-Malays to dominate the Malays and other weaker communities. In fact, in a Malaysian Malaysia, every community is to continue to preserve most of what it has already possessed except that no one should regard Malaysia as an extension of his own community. It is true that the Malay community will have to give up its special privileges; but the poor and the deprived sectors of the Malay community will be given special protection on the basis of economic, educational and cultural needs. If the principle

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of racial equality is firmly adhered to by all communities, there is no ground for the Malay elite group to fear that they would be outcompeted in a Malaysian Malaysia. In the Malaysian situation where every community standing alone is a minority, a strong sense of horizontal identification across communal lines - a sense of mutual trust, confidence, respect and attachment among the members of the different communities - can develop only in an atmosphere of racial equality.

To formulate a political formula that will accommodate communal differences while guaranteeing the adherence of all communities in Malaysia to the principle of political parity, much can be learned from the Lebanese Constitution of 1926 and the Lebanese National Pact of 1943 which form the basis of Lebanon's existence today.<sup>78</sup> The most important provision of the Lebanese Constitution is

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<sup>78</sup>With a few modifications, the Lebanese Constitution of 1926 is "the only Constitution in the Near East (except that of Iran) which has lasted since prewar times." Pierre Rondot, "The Political Institutions of Lebanese Democracy" in Leonard Binder (ed.), Politics in Lebanon (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1966), 128. While the Lebanese situation is not completely identical with that of Malaysia because the problems of language, race, and indigeneity (i.e., prior residence) do not arise in Lebanon, the two countries have many things in common. Lebanon is a multicommunal society although the major dividing line between the communities is religious-sectarian. The population is divided almost equally between Christian and Muslim inhabitants and each religion is subdivided along sectarian, clan or family lines. Numerically, no sect or community commands an absolute-majority status in Lebanon. Moreover, wealth cleavages and the urban-rural gap coincide with the religious division between Christians and Muslims, and Pan-Arabism has great attraction among the Muslims. For details, see Leonard Binder (ed.), ibid.; Michael C. Hudson, The



expressed in Article 9 which states "As a provisional measure and for the sake of justice and amity, the sects shall be equitably represented in public employment and in the composition of the Ministry, provided such measures will not harm the general welfare of the State." "Equitably" in fact means the allocation of public offices in direct proportion to the numerical size of each community. This provision is basic to the very existence of Lebanon and is more than only "provisional". Deference toward the vested interests of the sects is also stressed in Article 9, which provides for the respect of personal status and the religious interests of the population, and in Article 10, which guarantees the right of the sects to have their own schools.

The constitutional order in Lebanon is further strengthened by an electoral system designed to enable each community or sect in Lebanon to be represented in Parliament in proportion to its size in the country. To avoid the possibility that each community or sect may become a sort of "state within the state", the electoral system forces each candidate to depend on votes outside his own sect or community. This is done by adopting an electoral device based on a combination of a single electoral college and of proportional representa-

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Precarious Republic: Political Modernization in Lebanon (New York: Random House, 1968); Ralph E. Crow, "Religious Sectarianism in the Lebanese Political System", Journal of Politics, 14 (August 1962), 489-520; and Michael W. Suleiman, Political Parties in Lebanon: The Challenge of a Fragmented Political Culture (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967).





tion of the communities or religious sects. For example, in a given constituency, if the population distribution requires 6 Maronite Christians and 5 Sunni Muslims to be elected, the voters, regardless of sectarian origin, simply choose among lists of candidates, each of which includes 6 Maronites and 5 Sunnis. Furthermore, the National Pact, which is an unwritten part of the Lebanese Constitution, also provides for the political association of the diverse elements of the multi-sectarian society on the principle of parity, and requires that the President of the Republic be a Maronite Christian and the President of the Council of Ministers a Sunni Muslim so as to maintain a balance of authority.

Although the measures adopted in Lebanon do not entirely eradicate the influence of sects, clans and feudal lords in the political process, they have succeeded in creating a situation of intercommunal amity in which "the Assembly of Lebanon is both a place of political meeting and an agent of interconfessional union." "Each elected person is above all the representative of members of communities other than his own. He cannot be elected, he does not even have a chance to be on the list of candidates unless he seems 'acceptable' to communities other than his own; harmony is at a premium."<sup>79</sup>

To apply the Lebanese formula to the Malaysian situation

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<sup>79</sup>Pierre Rondot, op. cit., 133. See also Michael Hudson, op. cit., 211-261; and Michael W. Suleiman, op. cit., 42-56.



involves the termination of Malay special rights and political dominance. As these privileges and political preponderance have already formed the vested interests of the Malay community, they are difficult, if not impossible, to be removed by the stroke of a pen. Therefore, in adapting the Lebanese experience to the Malaysian environment, provisional measures should be arranged to accommodate the vested interests of the Malay community. For example, a ratio of 6:4 in favor of the Malays in public services may be followed for a period of 15 to 20 years, and the proposal of the AMCJA-PUTERA's People's Constitution that the Malays be given a 55-percent majority in Parliament may be adopted for a period of 10 years. While this special protection is given to the Malays, a well-planned program to help the poor and backward sectors of the society should be carried out and a resocialization program to reorientate all communities to accept the five political fundamentals should be enforced so as to ensure that the Malays would agree to terminate this special protection within the time-limit.

As to the composition of the police and armed forces, the principle of equal representation should be strictly followed because "If ... the army is not truly national, but is drawn only from certain elements of the society, it may sharpen envy and contradict unity,"<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>Howard Wriggins, "National Integration", in Myron Weiner (ed.), Modernization: The Dynamic of Growth (New York: Basic Book, Inc., 1966), 188.



and in a communal society, it may be used as an instrument of one community to dominate the others. The special protective measures for the poor and the underprivileged of the Malaysian society as a whole will also take care of the educational opportunities of the poor and underprivileged Malays and their desire to take part in industry and commerce. The Governors of Penang, Malacca, Sarawak and Sabah should be made eligible to be elected as the head of the Federation. To make this possible, the head of the Federation should perform no religious functions and should be called the Head of State rather than the Yang di-Pertuan Agong. In this way, he may become a focus of affection for all communities and thus enhance the sense of fellow feeling among members of the different communities. The sultans should continue to be the heads of the Muslim faith in their own states. All religions should be put under state jurisdiction and the Federation should be a secular entity.

The 55-percent Malay majority for two parliamentary terms is a transitional measure to ensure that Malay vested interests would not be abruptly affected. However, the Lebanese electoral system should be adopted for both parliamentary and state elections. For the first two terms, 55 percent of the parliamentary seats are to be apportioned to the Malay community but proportional representation by communities should be followed in other elections. Each state may constitute a single constituency because a large district and a long

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ballot will force candidates to respond to the aspirations and wishes of the members of communities other than their own. Moreover, small districts may not attain the same result in Malaysia because some may be so homogeneous in their communal composition that the successful candidates may depend most on the votes of the members of their own communities. The adoption of large constituencies and long ballots will, therefore, force typical champions of each community to make compromise. Such an electoral arrangement will also lead to the demise of exclusively communally-based political parties and compel all political parties in Malaysia to open their doors to membership from all Malaysians regardless of their communal origin. To formulate lists of candidates for each election, every political party must organize a multiracial united front and fight for the concurrent interests of all Malaysians rather than for the exclusive rights of a particular community. Such an outcome will surely accelerate the process of structural integration in other fields of social and economic activities leading to a change in the outlook of communal organizations.

As pointed out by Robert A. Dahl, "The likelihood of peaceful adjustment to a conflict is increased if there exist institutional arrangements that encourage consultation, negotiation, the exploration of alternatives, and the search for mutually beneficial solutions."<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>Robert A. Dahl, *Modern Political Analysis*, 2nd Edition (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970), 62.



The introduction of the Lebanese formula will thus lead to the growth of multiracial institutions and structures in Malaysia for sharing and exercising power among the various communities, thereby facilitating peaceful adjustment of conflicts for the benefit of all.

To pave the way toward the development of a broad consensus on the five political fundamentals among the Malaysian population and the adoption of the formula of political parity, political democracy should be encouraged so that the various communities can freely air their views and desires in a common effort to seek for a mutually beneficial solution. The current ban on public discussions of "sensitive issues" should be lifted while ways and means should be sought to ensure that these discussions will take place in a free and friendly atmosphere. The various goodwill committees and the National Consultative Committee established after the 1969 riots could become an effective means to undertake this task if their representativeness could be strengthened and their role could be redefined to explore alternatives of nation-building rather than to merely act as a shield for UMNO's policies. The establishment of the Department of National Unity in 1970 was a step in the right direction, but unfortunately, as reflected in the Rukunegara that the Department has been entrusted to enforce, it would seem that it seeks national unity, not for the building of a Malaysian Malaysia to guarantee future racial harmony and political integration, but for the implementation of the terms of 1957, which

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have been the focus of non-Malay discontent. While the importance of a Rukunegara in fostering national unity in a multicommunal society cannot be denied, in order that it will be the effective means for national unity, it should embody the broad consensus of the Malaysian population as a whole and reflect the realities of a multiracial, multicultural and multilingual society.<sup>82</sup>

To facilitate the advance toward a Malaysian Malaysia, intercommunal contact and communication should be encouraged. The persistent view of the Malays that the non-Malays, especially the Chinese, are still aliens and not willing to owe their allegiance to Malaysia arises largely because the Malay community as a whole has not been informed about the significant changes in non-Malay outlook and orientations that have taken place since the end of the Second World War. One way to eradicate this misconception is to encourage all newspapers in the country to adopt a multiracial approach to their news coverage. The Malay press should discontinue its long-standing practice of acting as the champions of Malay supremacy.<sup>83</sup> A national

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<sup>82</sup>As pointed out by Mr. Lim Kit Siang, the Secretary-General of the Democratic Action Party, after his release from detention in October 1970, "any fundamental principles concerning the Malaysian nation and its future should be formulated through popular consultation and should not be dictated by the wishes of one or two political parties." Sin Chew Jit Poh, October 21 and 25, 1970, 11 and 9 respectively.

<sup>83</sup>Since the 1920's, most of the Malay newspapers and periodicals have been spokesmen and champions of Malay rights and supremacy. See supra, 174-176, and 402, note 90. In 1965, the Utusan Melayu wrote: "The Utusan Melayu was born with three main objectives and policies.



newspaper in various languages should be established to carry translations of editorials and major news reports of all newspapers.

Television and radio programs should also be multiracially and multi-culturally oriented and devoted to the promotion of intercommunal understanding and respect. Multiracial movies, dramas, and cultural events should also be encouraged. In this way, mutual understanding will be improved. Non-Malays' willingness to become loyal Malaysians, to accept Malay as the national language, and to give special cultural and economic protection to the underprivileged sectors of the Malaysian society can then be communicated to the Malays while the Malays can show their willingness to give full acceptance to the non-Malays. A feeling of empathy, or the capacity to identify with others and imagine oneself living in a different situation, can develop among the members of the different communities.

Similarly, in the field of education, curricula should be designed to inculcate in the mind of the students racial harmony and equality and to strengthen their commitment to the five political fundamentals and the cause of a Malaysian Malaysia. Both Malay and non-Malay cultures are rich in historical precedents which emphasize the settlement of conflicts between opponents by mutual concessions and tolerance rather than by fighting and subjugation, and such materials

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First, defend the religion. Second, defend the race. Third, defend the homeland." Utusan Melayu, January 21, 1965. Such editorial policies should be discontinued if a Malaysian Malaysia is to be built.



should be given particular emphasis in the classrooms. In addition to those materials concerning the development of the Malay states in history textbooks, the role of the non-Malay immigrants in developing the peninsula and other parts of the country should be introduced to the pupils of all communities.

Singapore's system of "integrated schools" which offer classes in all languages should be adopted in Malaysia so that students from different communities can study under the same roof, the same administration and the same discipline, although they attend different classes according to the medium of instruction. All students will share a common syllabus and some classes, such as music, art, physical education and national language, can be conducted in Malay and open to students of different communal background. Multiracial literary associations should be organized to promote Malaysian literature and the study and use of the different languages in Malaysia.

None of the new Malay words created by the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (Language and Literary Agency) since the 1950's is drawn from Chinese source. While English source should not be ignored, Chinese and Indian words, if considered appropriate, should also be adopted so as to show that what belongs to the non-Malays also belongs to the Malaysians. For example, to use the Chinese word yemintin for imigrasi (immigration) would certainly convey a sense of satisfaction to the Chinese Malaysians. There are many ways to promote such a feeling of

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being accepted, and this is only one of the examples.

As noted earlier, to adopt an electoral system aimed at giving proportional representation to each community in the Federal and State legislatures will lead to the growth of multiracial political parties and social groups, a development which is known as structural integration - a process in which diverse elements of the society become integrated into common institutions and organizations.<sup>84</sup> Such an outcome will increase opportunities of intermixing among members of the various communities and thus increase social integration. To speed up this development, the Registrar of Societies in Malaysia can perform a very useful function. He has the bureaucratic power to accept, cancel and dissolve societies if they do not meet certain requirements. To achieve structural integration by emphasizing intermixing, this power can be used to encourage the growth of mixed societies, while discouraging communal societies and associations.<sup>85</sup> If the number of people belonging to mixed societies increases,

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<sup>84</sup>Supra, 8-9.

<sup>85</sup>Unfortunately, this was not done in Malaysia. According to Alvin Rabushka, the number of purely Malay societies increased from 1,300 in 1959 to 3,400 in 1965, whereas during the same period the number of societies with pure Chinese membership increased from 2,900 to roughly 3,400. At the same time, there was a decline in the number of Chinese belonging to Chinese societies, but the number of Malays in purely Malay societies increased steadily with an increase in the number of Malays mobilized. Meanwhile, the number of people belonging to mixed societies has declined since 1963. Rabushka considered this Malay bias in favor of mobilizing Malays and reducing Chinese mobilization opportunities as one of the conspiracies



social integration also increases and it will then be easier to mobilize mass support of all communities for a Malaysian Malaysia. The aftermath of the 1969 riots saw an increasing interest of the Malaysian government in promoting goodwill clubs, goodwill dinners and nights and multicultural events. However, as these measures have been taken to pacify communal sentiments so as to restore the status quo of Malay supremacy, they can hardly be expected to bring about the desired result of structural and social integration. After Dato' Dr. Ismail's "tak hidup tak mati" talk in January 1971,<sup>86</sup> the MCA has started a country-wide campaign to unite the Chinese to fight for a better place in Malaysia. This is largely a communal mobilization.<sup>87</sup>

To accelerate the process of structural integration and facilitate intercommunal contact, the Chinese in the New Villages should be encouraged to go back to the countryside. Land reservation

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of the Malay elites to maximize Malay interests and to maintain Malay supremacy. Alvin Rabushka, Ethnic Components of Political Integration in Two Malayan Cities (Ph.D. Dissertation, Washington University, 1963), 195-205.

<sup>86</sup> Supra, 378, note 43; 421-422.

<sup>87</sup> Chinese Solidarity Conferences have been organized both at the national and local levels by the MCA and other Chinese associations in February-March 1971. Tan Siew Sin admitted that he had committed a number of mistakes in the past. He indicated that he was prepared to resign as President of the MCA should the Chinese in Malaysia regard his leadership as being a barrier to a greater Chinese unity. For details of the whole campaign, see the Sin Chew Jit Poh, February-March Issues, 1971.





regulations should be relaxed to permit the non-Malays to engage in farming and other agricultural pursuits together with the Malays. The aim of these measures is to break the barrier of residential segregation in order that multiracial residential areas could be formed in the rural regions. To promote racial harmony and a fellow feeling, multiracial teams of mutual help for the seasons of harvest and planting and other major social events could be organized in these multiracial rural areas. Furthermore, multiracial community centers and playfields could be established to encourage constant intercommunal contact and communication. In towns and cities, housing projects should be designed to eliminate the phenomenon of residential separation along communal lines and encourage the face-to-face contact of the different communities.<sup>88</sup> Facilities for intercommunal contact and mixing should also be provided.

Finally, a carefully planned economic development program should be launched to rectify the urban-rural and the rich-poor gaps in the Malaysian society. Genuine assistance to the backward sectors

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<sup>88</sup> The importance of this has not been reflected in the housing policy of the Malaysian government. For example, in Johore Bahru, housing estates have been distributed along communal lines: Kampong Majidee, Kampong Pasir, Larkin Lama and others have been reserved for Malay residents alone. Commenting on this practice, one spokesman of the Democratic Action Party said: "The Alliance government's policy of segregating housing areas is surely not in line with the objective of multi-racialism. By such division and groupings, the various races are made more race conscious. They are also deprived of the opportunity to know and get along with the other races in Malaysia, by playing, working and living together." The Rocket, 3, 5 (May 20-June 20, 1968), 3.



of the various communities should be given purely on the basis of economic needs regardless of race. As Malaysia is still essentially an agricultural country, land reform, land ownership, increase of productivity, and diversification of agricultural products should be given priority. To prevent exploitation by middlemen, a system of co-operatives should be developed among the agricultural producers with government support. The myth that the rural Malays have been exploited by the non-Malays alone should be broken so that the Malays will realize that economic exploitation is a phenomenon which knows no racial barriers. Plans should also be made to expand the economy at a faster rate, to create more job opportunities, and to train skilled and qualified people not only to fill the jobs but also to exploit the resources of the country on their own. The tendency among the rural residents to cling to traditional norms and resist modern values and practices should be changed through a widespread program of education and resocialization aimed at accelerating the process of secularization - a process whereby men become increasingly rational, analytical, and empirical in their behavior - while de-emphasizing the irrational aspects of religious beliefs, superstitions or traditional behavior. As a matter of fact, one important aspect of the integrative revolution is to disengage the masses from traditionalism.

On the other hand, businessmen of all communities should be

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encouraged to employ multiracial employees so that structural integration can be extended to the fields of industry, commerce and labor unions. The MARA bank and projects should be reorganized so as to benefit the underprivileged of the society as a whole.

A "nation" is a political community which can be created through conscious efforts and in the direction that the nation-builders of a society consider desirable and feasible, whereas "race" refers to hereditary biological traits not easily changeable by education or assimilation. Unlike a Malay Malaysia which tries to build a nation based on the characteristics of one single race, a Malaysian Malaysia will be a political nation and will not be identified with any particular race. Such a nation could be created through fostering a broad consensus on the five political fundamentals -- multiracialism, multiculturalism, multilingualism, political equality, and the uplift of the poor and backward sectors of the Malaysian society. These five fundamentals not only serve as the basis on which a common identification with Malaysia as a multiracial, multicultural and multilingual nation among the members of the various communities can be developed. Widespread commitment of all the races to these fundamentals also strengthens their sense of mutual trust, confidence and respect, thereby creating a feeling of complete acceptance and common bond conducive to racial harmony and cultural co-existence. The natural process of acculturation and mutual accommodation will, in the long run, create

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a common political culture which will bind the races together as members of the Malaysian nation.

As the Malay community is already in a superior position both politically and militarily and can hope to obtain more benefits in other fields through the exercise of this supremacy, many people seem to doubt if the Malay leadership could be convinced to accept a Malaysian-Malaysia approach to the problem of building a Malaysian nation. If this view were correct, deadlock would ensue, the status quo remain, and Malay supremacy persist. Such an outcome would seem unreasonable to many people, because every community would stand to gain in the long run by accepting a Malaysian-Malaysia solution. It is true that deadlock is not uncommon in politics; but in Malaysia, this would mean either the forceful implementation of Malayization or the continued inability of the government to cope with communal problems that a large number of people regards as being urgent. Either of these two outcomes would certainly lead to popular unrest and the undermining of the legitimacy of the government. Therefore, to make a choice between a Malaysian Malaysia and a Malay Malaysia would be a crucial test of statesmanship of the Malay leadership as a whole.

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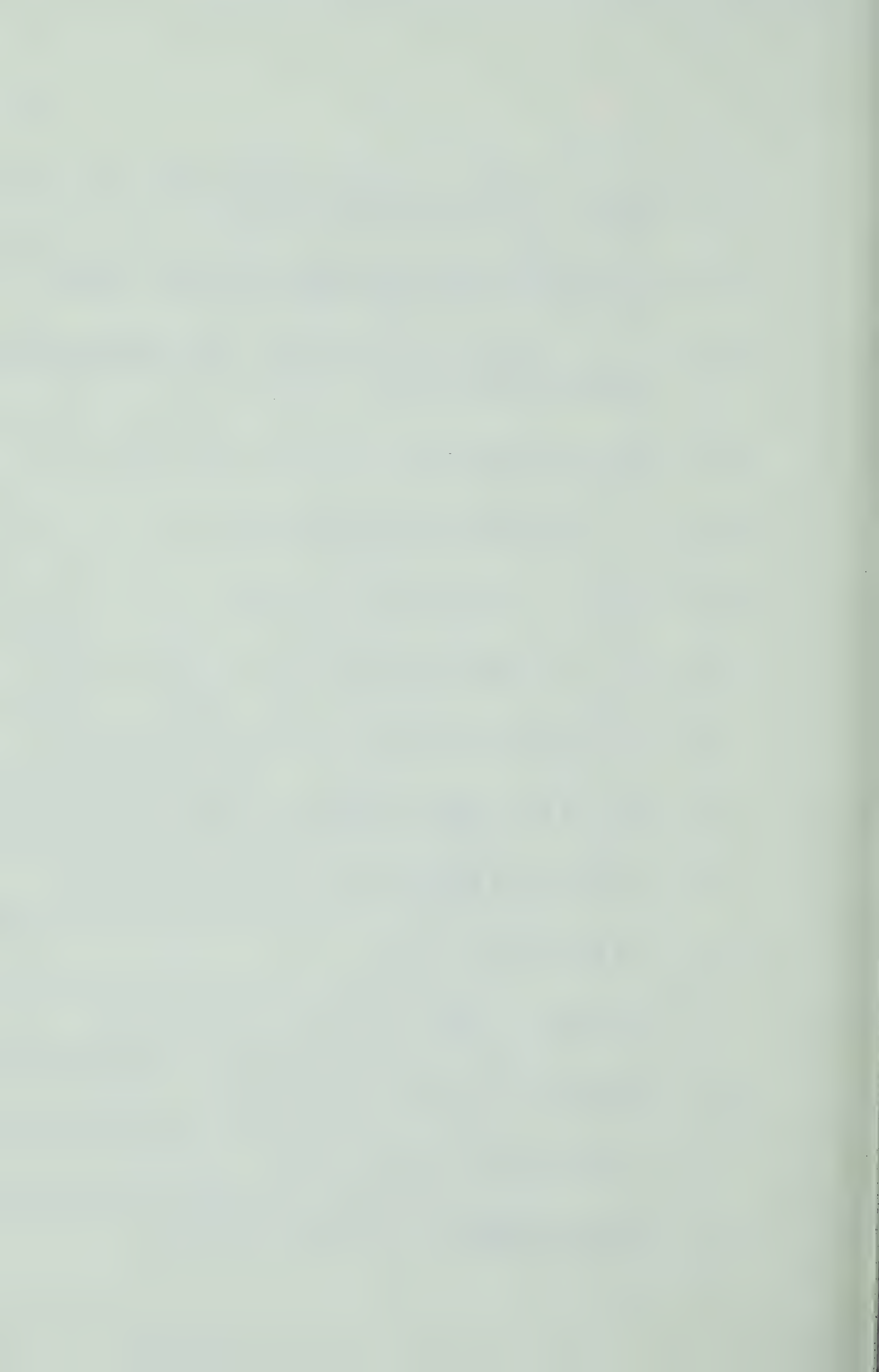
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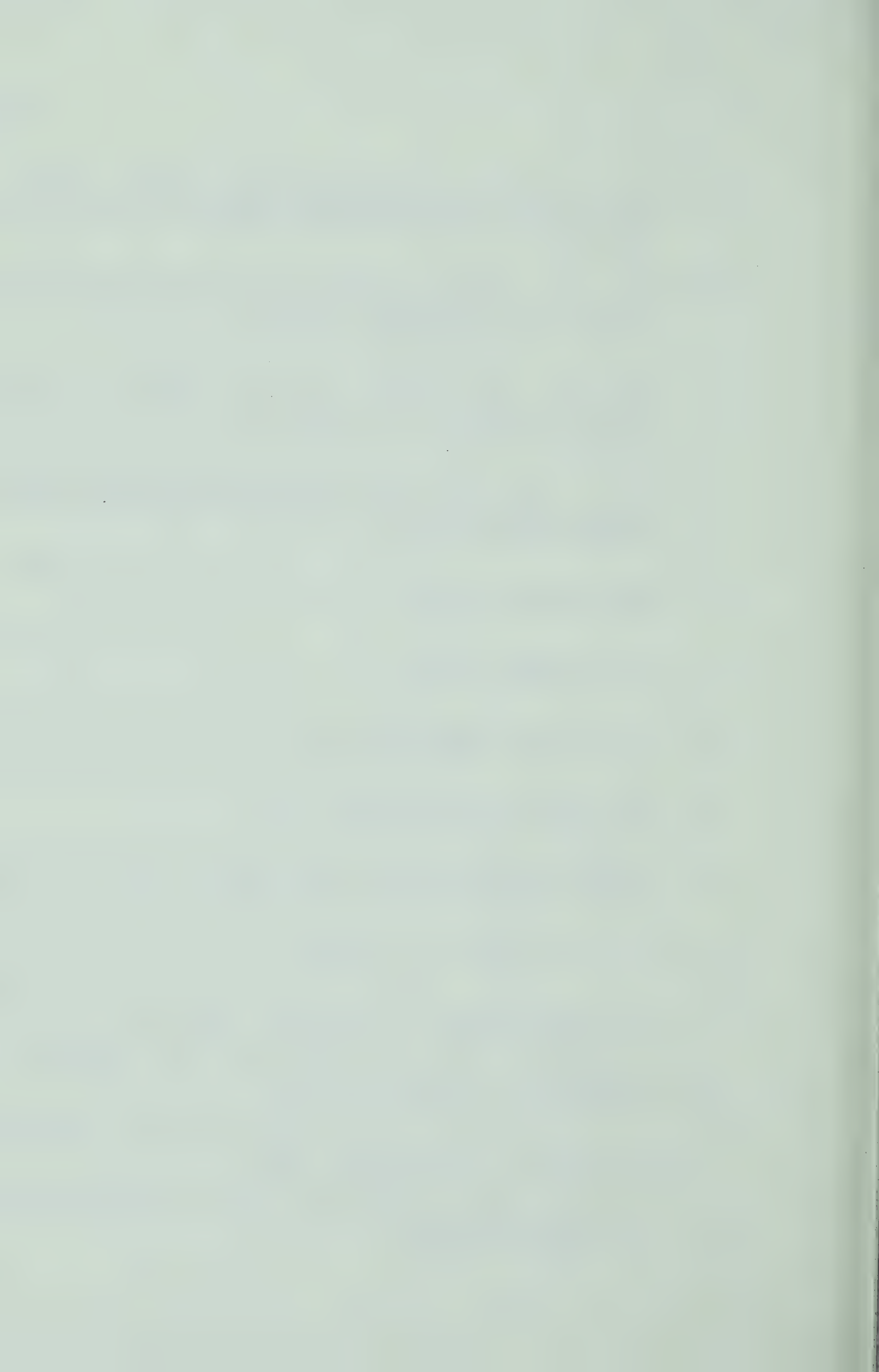
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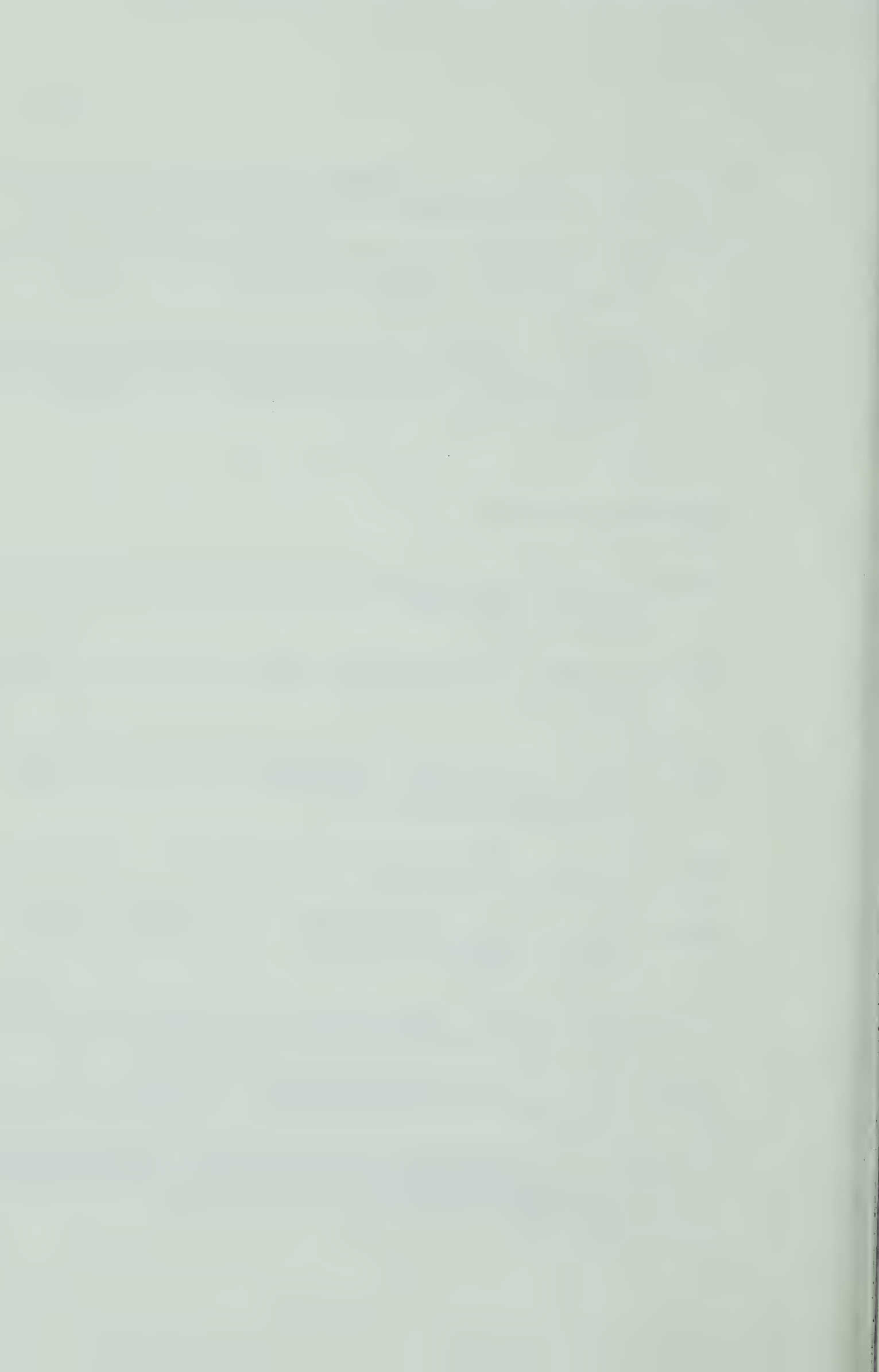
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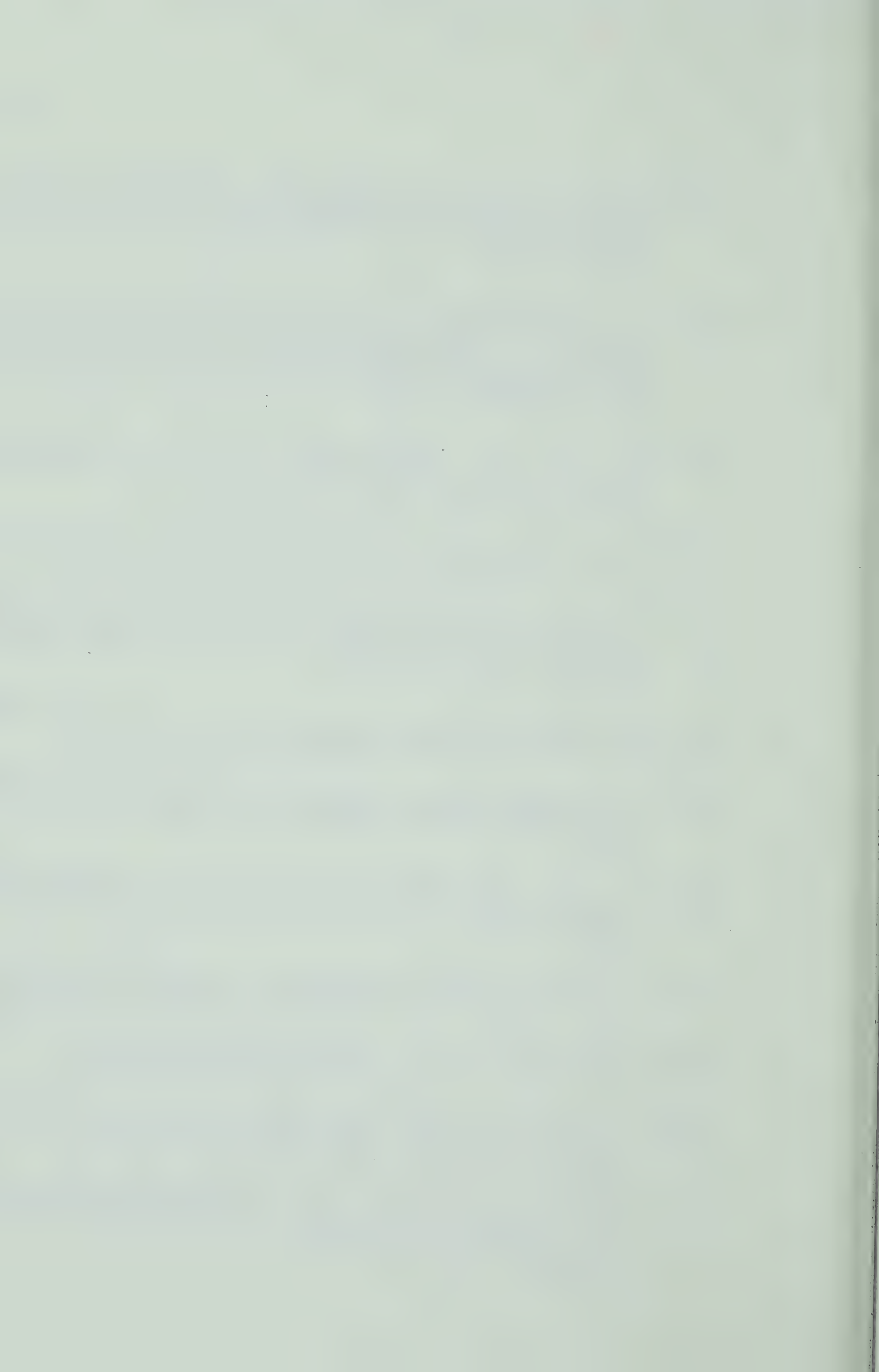
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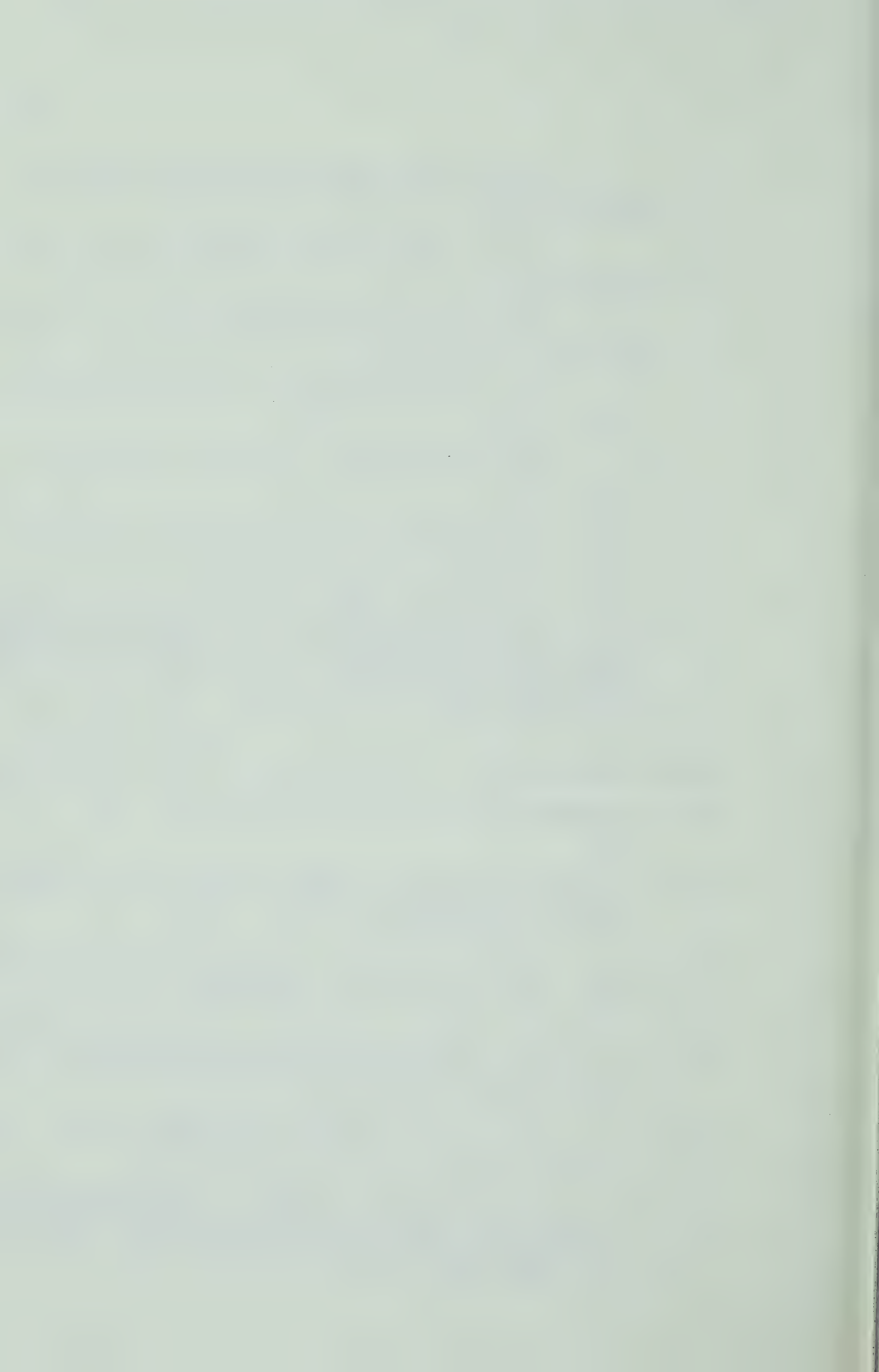
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